

A NEW SERIAL STORY COMMENCES IN THIS NUMBER.

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"THE BOYS WILL BE TOO LATE," SHE SAID, IN A TIRED, FAR-OFF SORT OF VOICE.

## BERYL'S MARRIAGE.

—10:—

### CHAPTER I.

BERYL CHESNEY had no parents, and she was the greatest possible anxiety to her nearest relations, who felt very uneasy about her future, which does not : can in the least that she was a troublesome or rebellious sort of a girl ; still less that she was in any way dependent on her uncle and aunt for support. They loved her dearly, and yet the fact remained that she caused them more trouble and anxious thought than any one of their own children.

Mrs. Dent had been a Miss Chesney, but though the name sounds aristocratic, the family were nothing to boast of in point of birth. Mrs. Dent's father made a fortune in a very simple way, he discovered (or, shall we say, invented) a particular kind of soap, which "caught on" and became the rage. From keeping a very small retail shop in the Borough, after the soap became

famous, his prosperity increased by leaps and bounds, inasmuch that he soon renounced the grocery line and retail trade and decided to devote the remainder of his days to making soap.

About this time he committed the one folly of his life, and after being a widower for many years married a girl young enough to be his daughter ; who, perhaps, finding herself decidedly unsettled by her promotion had the grace to depart this life at the birth of her only child.

This little boy—it was a son—counted for nothing in the family councils. Joshua's fancy was to "found a family," so, though he gave his daughter Julia fifty thousand pounds on her wedding-day, he announced publicly the rest of his property would go to his elder son John. That worthy young man married a lady of rank, the Honourable Miss Clare, which so delighted the soap-manufacturer that he gave the bride a suite of diamonds as a wedding present, and not long afterwards died, leaving a will which might have

been stigmatised as unjust, since it gave two hundred thousand pounds to his eldest son and only secured an annuity of three hundred a year to the child of his old age.

The will was hampered by but one condition. John could only enjoy the interest of the fortune, at his death the principal went to his eldest son, or daughter if Providence had been unkind enough to send no son. If John died childless everything passed to his half-brother Richard.

Mrs. Dent was loudest against the will ; she loved John devotedly, and did not grudge him a shilling of his prosperity ; but she regarded Richard as an unneeded off-shoot of the family branch which could very well be dispensed with. In vain her husband, good easy man, represented to her John had two children already, and for all he could see might have a dozen more, Julia's anxieties began, and from that day they had never ceased. First, the Honourable Kathleen Chesney died, and her husband showed himself so inconsolable that it was useless to attempt (at present) to persuade him to marry again. Then

the small son, "the heir," as he was proudly called, succumbed to some infantile disorder, and John Chesney never held up his head again.

He proved his confidence in his sister and her husband by leaving his little girl to their sole guardianship.

He gave them a free hand, too, respecting Beryl; all he stipulated was that her mother's family should be allowed occasional access to the child; that she should have the best education money could furnish, and not be allowed to marry until she was twenty-one without the consent of her uncle and aunt.

Mr. and Mrs. Dent had four daughters of their own, but they regarded Beryl as a most precious charge, and gave her as much love and care as they gave any one of their own brood. She was a happy-natured, winsome girl, and as she grew up inherited her dead mother's beauty; but, unfortunately for the Dents, who longed to see her happily married (that an heir might cut off "that lazy Richard" from all chance of the property), as she reached womanhood she showed the greatest possible distaste for all mention of love and lovers.

The Dents were rich people, and required nothing for Beryl's maintenance except her school bills and an allowance for dress and pocket-money; so the interest of her fortune accumulated year by year, and the original sum had well-nigh doubled itself.

For so great an heiress the girl lived simply enough. When Joseph Dent retired from business he bought the lease of a big old-fashioned house near Clapton, which was about to fall into the hands of a speculative builder. It was a wonderful house, considering how close it was to the din and roar of the great City; the grounds were charming, the flowers grew profusely; there were five "reception rooms"—vide the auctioneer's advertisement—and stabling for six horses, besides bedrooms enough to have taken in a dozen or so of guests. It was just one of those old-fashioned mansions which are fast disappearing off the face of modern London, and it exactly suited the Dent family.

The only son could go in to his business by train in a quarter-of-an-hour. Mr. Dent himself could potter about the grounds and imagine himself a botanical genius, though it must be confessed the gardeners were often obliged to disregard his directions.

His wife had her conservatory and her pony carriage; while the girls, with their tennis and archery in summer, their carpet dances and afternoon teas in winter, really had as good a time of it as girls could wish for.

Two of them left the nest the year after going to the Oaks. They married plump, substantial City men, and did not go to them empty-handed.

The weddings were as grand as had been seen in the neighbourhood for twenty years, and Beryl was chief bridesmaid to the elder bride, whose special companion she had been.

Of course there was a breakfast, and toasts, and so on. The Dents were just the sort of people to go in for keeping up time-honoured customs, and the young man who proposed the health of the bridesmaids coupled with it the name of Beryl Chesney; hinting pretty plainly it would not be long before she filled the chief part in a ceremony similar to to-day's.

Beryl said nothing then; she was far too well-bred to have interrupted the toast; but later, when the unfortunate young man found himself at her side, and attempted some rather high-flown compliment, she told him coldly she "would trouble him to confine his prophecies to people foolish enough to care for such folly," and swept away from him with the air of an injured princess.

The double wedding had occupied Mrs. Dent so much, perhaps, she had not worried over Beryl so much as usual, but she made up for it later. The very day after the ceremony she received a letter from Beryl's maternal aunt, Lady Lester, desiring, or rather commanding, that her niece should be entrusted to her for the approaching London season. The lady was poor, and intimated pretty plainly the expenses of the campaign would have to come out of Beryl's

fortune; but it was ridiculous for such an heiress not to be presented at Court, and no doubt dear Mrs. Dent was unable to afford her this advantage. She herself should be in London from the end of April, and should be delighted to present Beryl at one of the May Drawing Rooms.

The letter hurt Mrs. Dent's feelings a good deal (as it was meant to do), showing her pretty plainly Lady Lester had a very poor opinion of her power to find desirable acquaintances for their niece.

"Don't fret, mother," said Uncle Joe heartily. "Lady Lester is as poor as a fine lady can be, and if Beryl were a needy orphan instead of an heiress it's very little we should hear about this anxiety for her sister's child." "I'd show the letter to Beryl, and hear what she says."

Beryl came in at that moment, and Joseph Dent, with a broad wink at his wife, went out through the open French windows of the morning room.

Beryl Chesney at this time was twenty, and beautiful enough to have attracted lovers even if she had been penniless. She was rather over the middle height, and had her mother's bright chestnut hair and violet eyes; but while Kathleen had been a creature of smiles and tears, her daughter was wonderfully self-possessed, and very rarely, even to those who loved her best, showed what she really felt. She was a clever girl, and had had some desire to go to Gorton, but yielded the point when she saw that it was a serious grief to her aunt, who really, poor, simple lady, regarded a college course for a girl almost as prejudicial to her matrimonial chances as a residence behind convent walls.

It was a lovely day, late in April, the season was unusually forward, and so the lilacs and may trees were in bloom, and Beryl had gathered a spray of the sweet mauve flower, which she had fastened in the waist-band of her white dress, and which made her look a very embodiment of spring.

"How tired you look, Aunt," she said, affectionately; "aren't you glad the weddings are over. Tiresome things!"

"Everything went off beautifully, dear," said Mrs. Dent, gently, "and I am sure the girls will be happy."

"Well, we must hope so," said Beryl, practically; "but I don't think either Mr. Lynton or James Carden particularly amusing companions, even for a few hours, and to spend a life-time with them would be intolerable."

"Unless you loved one of them," suggested Mrs. Dent.

"I don't believe in love, Aunt."

"Beryl!"

The tone was so indignant that Beryl relented and qualified her sentence.

"Except in rare cases. Now, I'll quite admit that Uncle Joe loves you."

"Yes, our affection has stood the test of nearly thirty years. Beryl, I am very troubled about you."

"Please don't be," said Beryl, who knew by long experience what was coming. "I am perfectly happy here, Aunt Julia, and I am sure you and Uncle Joe could not be better to me if I were your child."

"You are nearly twenty," went on Mrs. Dent, unbribed by this piece of flattery. "I married at eighteen."

"But I don't want to be married," said Beryl, laughing. "I haven't found an Uncle Joe."

Mrs. Dent sighed.

"You are a great heiress, Beryl, and we are plain homely people. If there is no one among our friends likely to please you it might be better to accept this proposal of Lady Lester's. Will you read her letter?"

Miss Chesney read the letter, and then—rude girl that she was—tore it into small fragments.

"Beryl!"

"Well, she shouldn't be so rude to you, then. You could have been presented if you had liked."

"I shouldn't care about it, dear. I was always one for keeping myself among people of my own class."

"Well, she has no right to hint that you couldn't go to Court. There's no harm done, Aunt Julia. You know Lady Lester's address, so you

can write to her, though I have destroyed her precious letter, and you can tell her I have no desire for a season in London, and that if I had I should prefer a different chaperon."

"She is your mother's own sister, dear," objected Mrs. Dent, simply; "she must have your interest at heart."

"She has her son's interest at heart if you like," said Beryl, with flaming cheeks. "I think I had better tell you all about it, Aunt Julia, and then you won't be quite so taken in by her ladyship's professions of affection."

Mrs. Dent looked troubled.

She knew that Beryl had spent one summer vacation with Lady Lester when she was nearly seventeen. Looking back she recollected that the girl had been most reserved and silent about her visit, and had firmly refused to go to the Castle again.

It was about that time, too, that Beryl's objections to every touch of sentiment began to be noticed, and that she first gave vent to those bitter little speeches—about love and lovers—to which the Dent family had now grown so accustomed.

"You were barely seventeen then, Beryl," said Mrs. Dent, gently; "and fashionable people's ways are very different from ours. Don't you think you may have misunderstood Lady Lester, and that she really meant kindly?"

"She was kindness itself—in words, and to my face, that is," admitted Beryl; "but think a moment, Aunt Julia, and tell me, was I very ugly three years ago?"

Mrs. Dent was frank to a fault.

"You were not 'ugly,' dear. You had outgrown your strength, and that gave you an awkward stoop, and it was just after you got over that bad attack of low fever, and all your hair was cropped short like a boy's."

"Ah!" said Beryl, with a smile, "when I had been a week at the Castle Sir Charles Lester arrived, my own first cousin, you know, just fresh from Oxford."

Mrs. Dent nodded.

"Lady Lester was always pairing us off together; but I never thought anything of it any more than your sending me out with Joe when the girls were away. Well, it was the day before I was coming home, and I was supposed to be packing; but I had left one of my books in the little drawing-room, and I ran down for it. Only curtains divided this room from Lady Lester's boudoir, and she was there talking to Charlie. I declare, Aunt Julia, I hadn't the least idea of being dishonourable; but I heard my own name, and then I seemed to be spell-bound. I really could not move. I was rooted to the spot."

Mrs. Dent put one plump motherly hand on Beryl's in token of sympathy, for she began to guess what was coming.

"Beryl Chesney will have a quarter of a million," I heard Lady Lester say in her calm way; 'and, Charlie, you've no idea how bad things are. I kept it from you when you were at Oxford. Money must be had somewhere or you'll be ruined.'

"I'm sorry, mother," he said; "but I couldn't do it. I really couldn't. She's nothing but an ugly girl with a figure like a maypole. She doesn't even dress herself like other people. If I married her I should be ashamed of my wife every hour of my life."

"Won't you be more ashamed if this old place, which has been in the family for centuries, comes to the hammer?" asked his mother; "and, mark my words, it will. Nowadays, Charlie, married people aren't tied much to each other. When once Beryl was your wife you could leave her here and go abroad shooting big game in the Rockies, or fishing for salmon in Norway, or any other sport in which ladies have no share. It would be better than having to face the world again after passing through the Bankruptcy Court."

Mrs. Dent could not restrain herself any longer, and the word which escaped her was not complimentary to Lady Lester, in plain English it was—

"Brute!"

"Well," went on Beryl, rather wistfully, "I dragged myself upstairs, and finished my packing, then I sent down word I had such a headache I could not appear at lunch."



"Lady Lester brought me a tray up with her own hands, and tried to persuade me I should be better for some fresh air. Charlie would drive me in his dog cart. I don't know but that she had persuaded him to propose to me after all, but I never gave him the chance."

"I kept my own room all the rest of that day, and as you know, Lester Castle is so far off, I had to leave before any of the family were stirring in the morning."

Mrs. Dent hesitated.

"Do you think Lady Lester has any idea that you overheard her conversation with Sir Charles?"

"I thought so at the time."

"She has taken no notice of you at all since," went on Mrs. Dent. "It is just as though she had been giving you time to forget."

"I am not good at forgetting. Nothing will induce me to spend a night beneath her roof until her son is married or," and Beryl gave a little ghost of a laugh, "until I am."

"If only you were reasonable that last contingency need not be far off."

Beryl shook her head.

"Joe is over head and ears in love with Susy Potter, so you won't have him much longer; Maude and Kate are sure to follow the example of their elder sisters and marry young; there will come a time, Aunt Julia, when you may be really thankful to have me left."

"I should miss you terribly," assented Mrs. Dent, "quite as much as one of my own girls; but, Beryl, I can't bear the idea of all that money going to Dick Chesney; he's not a good man, dear, and I want you to marry and cut off his chances."

The girl gave a little sigh.

"I don't see that it matters, Aunt Julia; the money must be mine while I live, and it has grown so much I shall have plenty to leave legacies to all my friends without encroaching on Uncle Dick's share, and what does money matter when one is dead?"

"He is not your uncle," said Julia Dent; she was good to most people, but she well-nigh hated her half-brother, "and he is a bad man; it makes me perfectly wretched, Beryl, when I think of the fortune my father took so much pains to make good to him."

Beryl pursued the subject, this young unknown uncle had a mysterious interest for her.

"How old is Uncle Dick? Why does he never come here?"

"He's twenty-nine; he doesn't come here for the best of all reasons—he wouldn't be admitted."

"But, what has he done?" persisted Beryl. "Do you know, I can just remember him, I think. A big boy in knicker-bockers a year or two older than Joe; he spent a long time here once."

Perhaps Mrs. Dent felt other people might enlighten her niece if she refused to do so, or else she thought a word of warning might not be amiss in case Beryl met the erring Dick in society; so she opened her heart.

From her story it appeared that the younger son had not inherited that pride in the family soap which characterized his sister.

On leaving school he had been offered a post in the manufactory and declined. This was bad enough in all conscience, but there was worse to come—he had commuted his annuity—Mrs. Dent was not sure of the exact terms, but that was what she called it—for a capital sum, and gone abroad like the prodigal son of the Bible to spend his substance in riotous living.

Beryl thought privately it could not have been so very riotous since the sum had lasted the prodigal till he was twenty-four; but she kept her opinion to herself, and was quite ready to sympathize with her Aunt Julia when she heard the sequel of the story.

Dick Chesney had married a widow old enough to be his mother, and after a few years of a cat and dog life they parted, the elderly wife having the pleasure of making Mr. Dick an annual allowance so long as he left her unmolested.

"That fellow has never done an honest stroke of work in his life," said Julia Dent, angrily; "he's wonderfully good-looking and has a great talent for music, besides what people term fasci-

nating manners, and these gifts together have helped him to get into society."

"Bless me, my dear, Dick Chesney goes everywhere; he's received in society your Uncle Joe and I shouldn't think ourselves nearly grand enough for. If you'd accepted Lady Lester's proposal you'd have seen him to a certainty. He's ashamed of soap, the honest soap which was the making of us all, and gives out that he is connected with the Derbyshire Chesneys; the younger son of a junior branch, he says he is, and so while his poor wife repents her folly in a Brighton boarding house Dick flaunts his bold bad face in all kinds of fashionable circles."

"I'm thankful my father did not live to see it, and though I've no wish to be hard on anyone, if that young man's wickedness could be unmasked and his fine friends know him for the base creature he really is I should be positively thankful."

Beryl did not make any remark. It was not for want of interest, as the story had much impressed her, but she feared that whatever she said might be used by Mrs. Dent as a lever against her. As it was, even her silence could not protect her from the admonition.

"And that's the man, Beryl, who will inherit my poor father's fortune if you persist in saying 'No' to everyone. Why, child, apart from your own happiness (and a good husband would make that), don't you see it's a sacred duty you owe your family, to marry just to prevent all that money from going to a scoundrel."

She left the room as she spoke, and Beryl shed a few tears as she thought over the story. She was not in the least disposed to fulfil the "duty" her aunt thought so sacred, but she did see now, what had always puzzled her before, why Mrs. Dent was so anxious to resign her to a husband's care.

## CHAPTER II.

It was on the South-East Coast, or, to be more correct, near a very popular town in Kent. It had been a scorching hot August day, but now towards evening a breath of air had sprung up and everybody was out and enjoying it. On the sands, placed just so that the shadow of a giant cliff should shelter him from the last rays of the sun, was a tall, muscular-looking young Englishman, who without being exactly handsome had yet a very taking face.

Denis Adair was thirty turned, he belonged to one of the oldest families in England, had the bluest blood of the land in his veins, but the Adairs had fallen on evil times. His old house was deserted because he could not afford to restore it and avert the ruin which decay and neglect were fast bringing on it. His shooting was let year after year to a man who had made a pile in cotton, and knew nothing about handling a gun. His home farm, gardens and orchards were leased to a neighbouring florist, who sublet the former to an enterprising dairy company.

Denis had for himself just three or four rooms that were fairly habitable, and which he rarely occupied, because he could not bear to look on the ruin around. For the rest the various rents before mentioned brought him in enough to live as a bachelor, in what he called poverty, but would have seemed very like luxury to a less fastidious person.

He was dressed in flannels of irreproachable whiteness. His sailor hat had a crimson ribbon on it. As he lay idly on the sand, smoking a choice cigar, he listened with careless attention to his companion, who was expatiating on some subject which seemed to possess for himself great interest.

"You're about tired of knocking about the world, Adair," he said, lightly, "and I don't wonder at it. Why ever don't you marry and settle down?"

Sir Denis tossed away the end of his cigar, and replied leisurely.

"I don't think arithmetic is your strong point, Dick, or you would surely know that two is a larger number than one."

"Well!"

"I have the greatest difficulty in supporting

myself in genteel poverty. It would be simply impossible to support a second self. It would mean the workhouse in a very short time."

"But if the second self possessed means," returned his friend. "There are lots of rich girls about nowadays, and Lady Adair is such a fascinating title. You would surely find someone willing to pay a high price for it."

"Hem!" said Adair, curtly. "Dick, my good fellow, you've made such a confounded mess of your own matrimonial affairs, I had rather you did not interfere with mine."

"No offence meant, my dear man," retorted Dick; "but you see I was handicapped. I had nothing in the world to recommend me except my good looks, you have a title and one of the oldest estates in Kent, which makes all the difference."

"The said estate being mortgaged to the hilt, and the house on it well nigh in ruins. I don't think an heiress would care for such an investment, and I've not the least intention of proposing to one. There's a method in my madness, Dick. I know I'm going to ruin, but I rather prefer it to selling my mother's title to the highest bidder."

The other man opened his eyes.

"And yet you profess to be proud of your home and feel some attachment for it."

"I'm as fond of Heron Dyke as though it were a living thing, and if effort of mine could restore it to its old splendours it should be done; but you see, Dick, I am fit for no profession but soldiering, and a man can't make twenty thousand pounds at that; besides, there was such a lot of business to see to when my poor old dad died that I cut the army; I'm rather sorry I did now."

There was a note of regret in his voice, but his mood quickly changed, and as a large wave rolled unpleasantly near his feet he started up with a merry laugh.

"I tell you what it is, old man, while I am listening to your words of wisdom we are both dangerously near getting drowned; remember, please, the tide is coming in fast; it's impossible to scale the cliff at this point, and if we don't get round that next crag before the sea reaches up to it it will be a case of wading round or waiting here till morning."

"Till the tide turns," corrected Dick; "but we should be drowned before then, it's two hours yet to high tide, and this spot will be under water in a very few minutes."

Looking round Denis Adair noticed that while they had been talking the sands had gradually become deserted. This special part, which stretched far back between the angles of two widely projecting rocks, was quite a trap to the unwary; there was, indeed, a notice painted on a board fixed on one of the cliffs that the whole space was submerged at high tide.

Dick had collected their traps, when a sudden thought seemed to strike Denis Adair.

"Do you remember the girl who passed us an hour ago?"

"I remember thinking she was a great deal too good-looking to be obliged to walk about alone."

"Be serious for once," said Denis, gravely; "do you suppose she made for the steps? because if not she must be just the other side of that crag, and—she'll be drowned if we don't warn her."

"We shall very likely be drowned ourselves if we turn back," said Dick, sharply; "and the girl has probably gone up the steps long ago. There's no need for us to risk our lives."

"I shall go and see," said Sir Denis, with the quiet decision which his friend knew it was useless to combat. "Oh, I'm not asking you to accompany me," he added, a little sarcastically; "you'll be at the cutting in a few minutes, and had better make your way to a place of safety; only, Dick, look here, if I'm not with you in—say half an hour—you'd better send a boat round, for it'll mean danger."

Dick nodded and hurried off in the direction of the cutting. To be sure the next crag once gained he would be safe, but he preferred to be on the top of the cliff; he thought he could look down and see how it fared with his friend, for

though an intensely selfish man he had a real regard for Adair.

"It's a fool's errand," muttered Adair to himself, "but I can't let a woman be caught in such a trap. I dare say she got to the steps, and is high and dry on the cliffs by now, but I'd rather make sure."

As it was the water had come in so rapidly that he had to wade in it nearly up to his knees to get round the point, which was of course just in the opposite direction to the crag round which Dick had safely clambered.

Denis Adair was just going to admit his effort had been needless, when there, under shelter of the rocks, her shawl rolled up for a pillow, her hat lying discarded at her feet, was the girl he sought, fast asleep.

Her slumber was not so unnatural, it had been an intensely hot day with not a breath of air, just the sort of weather to make anyone sleepy, and the light breeze which had sprung up at sundown would only act as a lullaby.

She made a perfect picture as she leant back against the rock; her face had a fresh pink colouring, her chestnut hair clustered round her forehead in natural waves, and the long dark lashes of her closed eyes only showed up more perfectly the dazzling fairness of her skin.

But beautiful as the picture was Sir Denis could not stay to contemplate it. Every moment their peril increased. The wind grew stronger, its power was making the waves come in with unusual force and violence. Why the last had well-nigh touched the girl's dainty little foot. The next would come nearer still.

He put one hand on her arm and shook her gently. He really did not know what else to do. It was light still, thanks to the red glow in the sky, so she would not have the terrors of darkness to add to her alarms.

Very slowly she opened her eyes, beautiful violet eyes, which somehow seemed to thrill through Adair's heart.

"You must forgive me," he said quickly, "there was no time for ceremony. The tide is coming in fast, and if we do not escape at once we shall be drowned."

She did not shriek or cry out; she showed no signs of alarm. Above all she shed no tears, for which Adair thanked her in his heart. She turned to him with a grave white face, and asked,—

"Shall we make for the steps?"

"The steps have been under water this half-hour. If we can get round this point and another half-a-mile further on we shall be safe."

"You had better hurry on," she said simply, "there is no reason you should be in danger for a stranger."

"I turned back on purpose. I had noticed you pass me some time ago, and thinking you a stranger, I feared you would not know how treacherous was the tide."

All this while they had been walking quickly on, and now they were near the point. Alas! Denis Adair saw at once it was hopeless to get round it. He was a tall man, but the water would have been up to his shoulders, and the loose stones and pieces of rock were so slippery that one false step would have capsized him.

He said nothing to the girl. No words were needed, she saw their peril for herself.

"Leave me," she said quietly, "indeed you must. No doubt you can swim, and why should you remain in peril when you can save yourself?"

"It is not a question of swimming," he said; "the rocks are so slippery that I could not climb over them, and if I left you alone to perish I should deserve to be drowned. Things are not quite hopeless. There is a little ledge some distance up the cliff, and if we can once reach that we may be able to keep a stand there till help comes."

"But will it come!" for the first time there was terror in her voice. "I only came down to-day, and I told no one where I was going, so they won't send to look for me."

"I had a friend with me when I decided to try and find you. I told him to send a boat after me if I did not turn up."

Denis was active and lithe. Climbing on hands and knees he managed first to reach the

ledge himself, and then to draw the girl's slight form to his side. He drew a breath of relief.

For the time they were safe; but their perils were not ended; the shelf or ledge was so narrow that they could not move at all without fear of losing their footing. Very soon they would get so cramped the position would be intolerable. Then even if Dick sent the boat they would have to descend the cliff and clamber over the rocks which stood between them and safety.

It was the strangest incident of Adair's life; with one hand he clutched wildly on to the cliff, the other arm he had flung round the girl's waist to prevent, if possible, her slipping. They had never seen each other till to-night; he had never heard her name, and yet he held her thus pressed close against his heart without reproach.

"Thank Heaven there's a moon," he said at last; "falling the boat they may see us from the cliff."

The moments passed on. Each one made their position more intolerable. Granted they were safe from the angry water, they could not remain like this much longer. Every limb in Adair's body was cramped and strained.

At last the girl spoke.

"I can see no boat; your friend must have forgotten us."

"It would take time to get a boat launched," said Adair, "and find hands to man her, don't give up hope yet."

Another silence.

"I'd rather you told me the truth," she said at last; "I'm not a coward—if the boat does not come—is it death?"

"Not while we stay here."

"But we can't stay much longer," she protested. "I feel so dizzy, I can hardly keep my head up; every moment I expect to slip—"

She meant to add and fall into the sea, but the words died on her lips.

"Could you save yourself if I was not here?" she asked, presently.

"I don't know; but it's no use speculating because I am not going to leave you. Have you a handkerchief?" he asked suddenly, and can you get at it? I can't reach mine."

No wonder with both hands so sorely tasked.

"I have a long scarf round my neck," she answered. "I can unfasten that."

"That's better still;" then as she unwound the long yards of silk, "hold it at one end and wave it as high as ever you can."

She obeyed him almost mechanically, and just as the white flag rose fluttering in the night breeze Denis Adair gave one piercing cry from the depths of his honest heart—"Help! Here I am—help!"

They waited in breathless silence, then, after what seemed to them hours of suspense, a sound reached them like human voices, but the wind carried the words away.

Perhaps the people on the cliff understood this, for a man suddenly took a newspaper from his pocket and making a kind of funnel of it shouted through that.

"Hold on a bit longer, we've sent for ropes, we can't get near enough to reach you without."

He spoke very slowly and deliberately, and each word reached the two in such dire peril.

And it was time hope came, for the water was up to their feet, and a terrible dizziness had seized on the girl making her ready to fall off that narrow ledge into the abyss of water below.

"The ropes will be too late," she said, in a tired far off sort of voice. "Tell them I said goodbye, and that you gave your life for mine."

She did not speak again, and Adair feared she had fainted.

Now something came whizzing over his head and just missed him; it was the friendly rope.

A second effort was more successful, but he simply dared not disengage his arms from that still figure, he felt she would slip from him now, when safety seemed so near.

The difficulty must have been noticed by the party on the cliff, for again the funnel was put into use, and the injunction came,—

"The rope will bear you both, come together. Shout when you're ready."

With fingers that were so cramped they would hardly do his bidding Denis Adair made the rope tight about his own waist, then with the girl clasped tightly in his arms he gave the upward signal.

It was terrible; never to his life's end did he forget the agony of that time; he was thankful his companion was insensible, and so unconscious of their peril; for he feared that brambles might tear her delicate flesh, or the rough edges of the cliff bruise her perfect face.

At that moment he forgot that she was a stranger, that he did not even know her name. He felt as though she belonged entirely to him, she was his precious charge, for whom he was responsible.

Slowly those on the cliff raised the rope with its double burden: they dared not hurry, lest the strain should break the cord and so fling back the pair to their peril.

The men worked hard and well; the spectators watched in an expectation so intense and fervent that not a single word escaped them, and then at last, when the suspense was intolerable the task was over, and there lay upon the green sward on the top of the cliff two still forms, whose faces where so white and statue-like they might have already been numbered with the dead.

And then there rose from the onlookers such a cheer as perhaps only English voices can raise, and with the cheer was mingled women's sobs, for now the tension was over the feelings so long pent up had voice.

"Who are they?" asked an old gentleman—he who thought of the paper funnel—"and how in the world did they come there?"

Someone pushed forward and took the answer on himself.

"This is my friend, Sir Denis Adair. We had been sitting on the sands, and were warned by the incoming tide to retreat. Adair had noticed a young lady pass us a little while before, and insisted on turning back to tell her of her danger. I did my utmost to dissuade him, for she was an utter stranger, and it was just throwing away his life."

"Not throwing away," said the old gentleman; "such a sacrifice could not be called that; besides I hope your fears are premature. Sir Denis is not dead but unconscious."

And no one claimed the girl for whose life Denis Adair had risked his own. Women's kindly hands did what they could to restore her for pure compassion's sake, but to one and all she was a stranger.

(To be continued.)

LAMP clocks were among the early specimens of the clockmaker's art. A kind quite common in the seventeenth century consisted of a lamp burner placed at the base of a glass oil receptacle mounted vertically on a suitable standard. The oil reservoir had attached to it a scale, facing the burner and showing the hours, beginning at four o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the lamp was to be lighted in winter, and ending at seven o'clock in the morning. The lamp being lighted the gradually descending level of the oil, as combustion proceeded, marked the hours. Another device of later origin utilized the same principle. It consisted of two communicating oil chambers superposed by a clock dial. In one of the chambers was placed a night lamp to illuminate this dial, and in the other was suspended a float from a cord which passed around a small pulley. The latter was mounted on a small horizontal axis ending in the centre of the dial. The float of course descended as the oil was consumed and carried the index-hand along with it, thus making the hours precisely as in the case already cited. At their best these timepieces could have had only an indifferent degree of accuracy, yet they probably served their purpose well, and certainly are interesting at the present time as illustrating some of the expedients adopted by mechanics of an earlier period.



## STRAYED AWAY.

—10—  
CHAPTER XLI.  
TWO LETTERS.

MR. FALKLAND the elder felt sorry when Percy was gone. It occurred to him that he might have been less stern, for Percy had evidently suffered deeply.

But the builder could not tolerate the idea of accepting Fanny as his daughter-in-law, of meeting old Bill West as a relative.

It injured his pride no bitterly. He had tried so hard to fight his way upward, and forget that the time had ever been when a Falkland wore an apron and carried a tool basket at his back.

"Percy might have spared me that humiliation," he thought, with a sense of disappointment that was not altogether unreasonable under the circumstances. "I am not prouder than most men, and it does seem hard that after I have given him the education and the income of a gentleman he should marry the child of a common workman in my employ. He must have known we never could receive her."

The old gentleman was in an unpleasant situation. He would have to explain Percy's absence to the Millards, and he was in some trouble himself as to how long that absence might be protracted.

There was no knowing what he might do in his desperation, and Falkland was very fond of his only son.

"However," he said after a little reflection, "Percy must return soon. He is very extravagant, and his money will not last long. He will have to come back to me when he wants more."

But Percy did not return so soon as was anticipated.

He went to an hotel, engaged a room, and ordered refreshments, in which a small decanter of brandy was included.

He chose the very worst method of calming his unquiet brain, for the decanter was empty before he went to bed.

He was very feverish and excited in the morning—unhappy, and full of a miserable self-consciousness that he had brought this punishment upon himself. He wanted to write to Adelaide, and he knew not how to write. What could he say that would prevent her thinking him a scoundrel?

All his anger turned against Fanny. He blamed her for everything. He determined to have the marriage set aside if possible; and there was some consolation to him in the thought that he would be revenged on Arthur Wilson by dragging that gentleman's name before the public in an action for separation.

Nothing is meaner than jealousy, more remorseless than disappointed passion. Had Percy stayed to reason with himself he never would have entered into such a course as might give to the world the story of his love—the one pure romance of his life.

He went to a solicitor, and held a consultation on the subject. He did not name himself as the aggrieved party, but spoke as if he were acting for a friend—a device that in no way deceived the practised man of law.

The solicitor heard him through patiently, listened with professional attention to Percy's history of his imaginary friend's real and fancied wrongs, questioned and re-questioned him on certain points till he had sifted out the bare truth of detail; and then he gave an opinion.

"Your friend has not the slightest ground for an action," said the solicitor. "He is, I should say, a hot-tempered, impulsive, jealous man, who magnifies trifles and tortures himself without occasion. I should advise him to believe his wife's simple explanation, ask her pardon for his very ungentlemanly doubt, and try to be happy for the future."

"But he has a fixed idea of her guilt," said Percy.

"Based on the single fact that he heard her

kissed by a gentleman who was not aware that she was married. Really, Mr. Falkland, if your friend wishes to be happy in his wedded life he cannot have too much faith and too little curiosity. Let him weigh that kiss, we will say, in the balance against his own small indiscretions during the time they were separated."

Percy winced and coloured under that remark.

"Yours is scarcely a legal opinion," he observed.

The solicitor smiled.

"It is friendly advice. I should not care to undertake such a case. Your friend would only succeed in degrading himself, and making an innocent lady and gentleman of irreproachable character the subjects of an infamous scandal. To me the lady's explanation seems perfectly satisfactory; it is an explanation of an apparent indiscretion."

"But he had been a frequent visitor."

"*Honni soit.* You know the proverb—'The evil is with him who thinks it.' Any gentleman might, after two years' absence, torture himself with stupid conjectures as to how his wife had spent her time, where, and in whose company. In the first place, a man has no right to leave his wife for a length of time, more especially if, like your friend, he leaves her in an equivocal position; in the next, he has no right to raise a question as to her faith; a true woman would dislike him for it for ever after."

"But this gentleman was an entire stranger to him."

"I understand from you that the lady resided in his mother's house for some months, and he assisted her in explaining away a lapse of correspondence; this assistance necessitated a visit or several visits, and he may have conceived a fondness for her; but it does not follow that she cared for him."

"Yet she let him kiss her."

"We are not sure of that. She may not have been aware of his intention; and even had she been there are so many kinds of kisses that there need not necessarily have been harm in that particular one. It may have been the kiss grateful or the kiss sympathetic. I should advise your friend to think no more about it."

"Then you think an action would not lie?" said Percy, moodily.

He was reluctant to take the lawyer's view of the matter. The image of Miss Millard haunted him. He would not give up that beautiful girl without a struggle.

"It would not. A jury would laugh it out of court. Your friend would be reviled by the press, and pointed at with contempt by the public. He never ought to have entertained a doubt; the simple explanation should have satisfied him."

Percy put the consultation fee on the table, bowed, and left the office deeply mortified.

"How can he feel for me?" he thought, in soreness of spirit. "To him the purest, tenderest feelings of our nature are but the strings that move the human puppets who bring him fees. He cannot feel what I felt when I sat in that room waiting with such glad expectancy for her return. I had travelled night and day, never staying to eat and sleep, and I heard her listening to the love words of another—met her with his kisses warm upon her lips. Even if that were all—if she had done no further wrong, I would cast her away."

In the bitterness of his anger he resolved to write to Fanny, and tell her the injury she had done him. He spared her no pain.

"I trust that you are satisfied with the result of your friend's mission," he wrote. "I have left my father's house for ever, and henceforth must earn my bread as best I can. He has sworn that he will not receive me till I am free from you. He knows our secret now. The mother of the man you chose in preference to me went to Penge on purpose to tell him, and he ordered me from the house in his presence."

"My love for you has been the bitter lesson of my life—my ruin. I could have endured everything had you been true. It is hard to think I have sacrificed parents, home and kindred,

wealth and position, for a woman who had not even the common virtue of faithfulness."

"It is the keenest punishment of my folly that, no matter how far apart we may be, I am fettered to you by a tie that nothing but death can sever—a tie that will make me an outcast, and drag me down to misery. Think of it, and be happy if you can. I have no hope in the world. Our miserable secret comes between me and my one promise of the future. You can be happy with your lover—the man who taught you to forget the faithful husband who was far away toiling for your sake."

"I shall have left England before this reaches you, and you will never see or hear from me again. I do not reproach you. Let your heart tell its own story. Think of the existence you have wasted—the great love you have sacrificed to a woman's sinful infatuation—a miserable greed of flattery—a perilous, shameful and silly fondness for acquiescence. Go your own way. Sink as you would sink. I have done with you for ever."

He added a bitter postscript—

"The money that has been settled upon you, and which I may be pardoned for supposing is all you care for, will continue to be paid you so long as you never dare to take my name. That name can never be borne by another, and it shall not be borne by one who is not worthy."

Percy did not post the letter at once. He had other arrangements to make before he carried out his promise of leaving England. He longed to see Adelaide once more. He could turn very easily from the sentimental sorrow he indulged in when writing to Fanny to the passionate fervour of despair in a letter to Adelaide.

He played the wronged husband very well, and the performance of the despairing lover was quite as good in its way.

He felt both parts deeply. There was a touch of sublime selfishness in his telling Fanny that their secret had come between him and the one promise of his future. It was simply telling her that he wanted her out of the way because he desired to marry another.

While the letter to Fanny lay before him in its envelope he penned an epistle to Miss Millard.

It was written in a style that must have made her pity him, though certain portions of it were vague.

He did not tell her all the truth; he did not tell her that he was married; he only hinted obscurely at a fatal tie, the nature of which he did not mention.

"There are some blows that crush," he began, "some that kill, some that strike at the heart and still let it live on. But those that kill are the more merciful—there is the end; suspense is gone; those that we love and lose are lost for ever; the pain is over."

"But with me, Adelaide, with me—I write as I feel—as the burning words of bitter suffering rise from my soul—the blow has fallen, stricken my heart and yet I live on."

"It is my punishment that I must love you always, and you can never be mine. The past lies between us; a sin, a folly of my youth has risen up, and there it is—a blight, a barrier."

"Ah, Adelaide, if you could see me—if before I leave my birthplace for ever I might ask for one word of mercy, of forgiveness—if I might clasp your hand, look into your eyes, read the sweet, sad story of your love, I think I could bear my lot with resignation."

"Guilty, wretched criminal that I am, it is an impiety for me to write to you who are so good, so pure, so beautiful! Yet I feel that you will pardon me, forgive me, in spite of the misery I have brought upon your sweet young life. You will write to me; perhaps you will come to me. In a few days I shall have left England for ever, and Adelaide, dear Adelaide, I shall have lost you!"

That letter he posted at once. The one addressed to Fanny he put aside for the present; he did not want her to receive it till he had heard from Miss Millard. He felt that he had acted like a scoundrel, and yet he hoped that Adelaide would come to him.

## CHAPTER XLII.

AT CAMBERWELL.

WHEN Mrs. Wilson left Fanny the poor girl tried to feel hopeful as to the result of her mission. She could not believe that Percy would never forgive her.

It would be difficult to say whether she was most pleased or pained by the discovery that her marriage was no longer a secret. She was pleased because it cleared her in the eyes of the doctor's widow, and the doctor's widow's son. They had proved for themselves that she was worthy of their kindly faith.

But she was pained for Percy's sake. Fanny felt that the consequences might be fatal to him, and her love was so enduring that she would rather have lived with a doubt on her good name than have proved her purity at the risk of injuring her husband.

They were very kind to her at home. Not a word of the past was ever mentioned. They did not know the truth, and they never reproached her with what they thought was the truth.

Baby was the pet of the household. Fanny's mother wept over it sometimes in secret. She loved the little thing dearly, but she cried when thinking of her daughter. Mrs. West had been so proud of her beautiful girl.

The younger branches of the West family were tutored into a sort of tacit silence concerning Fanny and the child.

Young Bill, the fire-escape conductor, loved Fanny in his honest, uncultivated way, and many a time he reflected over her wrongs when lying in his little bed and his watch-box of a night, or leaning against the wheel of his machine.

He felt it deeply, for he was proud—as the poor are proud—of a good name. There would have been mischief done had Mr. Percy Falkland and young Bill West ever met.

Fred Crosby and Emily White were frequent visitors. As a rule they spent every alternate Sunday at Dorset-terrace. Sunday was the only leisure day with Emily and Fred—the only leisure day, too, with young Bill and his father. Fred had discovered by this time that Fanny was altogether out of his style, and he was also growing very fond of Emily.

There was a little embarrassment between Fred and Fanny when they met for the first time in the new house at Camberwell. The young man could not gaze at her without a thrill, and Fanny felt that she had wronged him.

"I am glad to see you home again," he said, with a certain air of deference, for the dignity and grace of his manner subdued him. "It's the best place, after all."

"Yes," said Fanny with a sigh. "It is the best place." She could not suppress the sigh. It was hard to have to admit that her best place was the humble home from which she had strayed away.

"It's come just as I said," Fred began, when Emily stopped him by a quiet touch on the arm. Poor Fred sadly wanted tact; he spoke with the best intentions in the world, and if he was in the wrong it was for the want of knowing better.

Emily stopped Fred because she had a deeply-rooted conviction that Fanny was Percy's wife. Women are keen of instinct, and Emily knew her friend's secret by intuition.

"You will be happy yet," she said to Fanny; "I am sure you will, dear. You really have been wonderfully good to him."

"I love him," said Fanny, simply, "and I always shall, whatever happens."

"It will happen that he will come back to you," smiled Miss White; "repent of his injustice, and reward his net for her patience by making her happy for the rest of her life. You will see."

Fanny dropped her face on her friend's shoulder, and her eyes swam in tears. Would that picture—that dream of joy drawn by Emily—ever be realised!

The hope lived within her and grew strong. She had faith in Mrs. Wilson—a belief that her

intercession would be successful. The knowledge of her own perfect innocence gave the poor girl strength.

There were some pleasant passages in her days in spite of her great sorrow. Baby began to prattle, and he caused many a tearful smile when he talked of "dadda;" and then everyone in the house was thoughtful and kind to her. Old Bill West spent forty pounds of his hard-earned savings in furnishing her bed-room, putting extra things in her parlour, and laying out the garden, and he hired a piano for her, and he marvelled much when he heard her play with the sweetness of her tone and touch; the old man was charmed with the music of his daughter's voice.

Between grandpa and baby there was an entire understanding. Baby was quite a little gentleman in his way, and his dislike to common clothing was inherent, for he would not go to old Bill if old Bill wore his working dress; so old Bill put on his best every evening—it became a habit with him—his black coat, a big chair in the garden, and baby on his knee.

There is nothing prettier in the world than to see a strong man looking tenderly upon a little child, as West looked at Fanny's baby, while Fanny leaned over his chair, thinking to herself what a glad day it would be when she could tell her father that the child he caressed so tenderly was one of whom he might be proud; and Fanny felt that the day of gladness must come by-and-by.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

A SACRIFICE OF LOVE.

ARTHUR WILSON was deeply troubled when his mother told him what had passed at Penge. He looked upon himself as the cause of Fanny's separation, and he was bitterly sorry that the strength of his love had carried him so far.

"I can sympathise with Mr. Percy Falkland," he said, generous and just to the man who had not been either generous or just to Fanny. "He must be jealous of her; grudge every look and smile that she gives to another. I should, had it been my happy fate to be loved by her."

"It has cast a serious responsibility upon us," said the widow, gravely. "Should poor Frances be left destitute we must provide for her. She shall have a home here, and be to me as a daughter."

Arthur kissed his mother gratefully.

"I must see Mr. Falkland," he said; "offer him an explanation and an apology, reason him out of his insane doubt of the purest, noblest girl that ever lived. He will believe me."

Mrs. Wilson thought otherwise, and moved her head slowly in the negative.

"Our work is only half finished," she said. "It is doubtful whether either of the Falklands will acquiesce Mr. Millard of the truth. They may even persist in their present course, keep the matter secret, fancying that they may cast poor Frances aside, and so leave the way clear. You are slightly acquainted with the Millards, are you not?"

"As business men know each other. We have met in the bank parlour, drank sherry together at the same dinner-table, passed the usual comments on the weather, and likewise discussed city matters now and then."

"But the juniors!"

Arthur shrugged his shoulders.

"They are slightly out of my line, mother. They wear varnished boots, velvet waistcoats, the tightest of trousers, and the shortest of coats. They are of a fast age, fast."

Mrs. Wilson smiled.

"You have no sympathy with them."

"None. I pity them."

"Are they inclined to be friendly with you?"

"Very much so. I have been invited to run down to Penge a score of times, and taste the governor's wine. 'You'll get no end of a good dinner,' said Sydney to me, when he had gone largely into the governor's hospitable merits; 'and for a quiet evening out, ours is the topping place for you.' So you see, mother mine," added

Arthur with a smile, "I could easily cultivate a friendship there."

"Do so," said the widow. "Take the very next opportunity that offers itself. Dine with them to-morrow if they ask you. It will be easy then to talk of Mr. Percy over the dinner-table, and tell the truth as though it were a matter of no importance to you."

"I will," Arthur said. "It is probable that I shall see one of the Millards to-day, and if so we must try how the stratagem will work."

This conversation took place at breakfast, and Arthur went to business. At luncheon time he met Mr. Sydney Millard, knowing exactly at which dining-room to find that rapid young gentleman.

The Millards junior held Arthur Wilson in much respect. They had heard him spoken of by their father as "one of those quiet men who are up to everything. Never misses a chance—never makes an error of judgment; he will be a partner in that bank if they are wise."

So Sydney left a little knot of sherry-and-bitter friends, and stopped in the middle of a questionable anecdote that had to be told in the lowest of tones, checked his friends' laughter by a look, and saluted Wilson quietly.

"You ought to come down before the garden goes to seed," said Sydney, after some few moments' converse; "the governor would be glad to see you, I can tell you."

"Thanks. I will take an opportunity as soon as I can; but my time is occupied just now. In fact, after to-morrow—"

"Come down to-morrow, or to-day, if you like," dashed in the enthusiastic youth, "and we'll invite Falkland, though he don't need inviting! He makes himself a precious deal more at home than I do. He puts me down rather."

"Which Mr. Falkland is that?"

"Oh, the young one, Percy. He's not a bad sort, you know, when you get the right side of him. He comes after Adela, my sister."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, he cut out old Vitey. Vitey almost swoons if anyone mentions Falkland's name—not that I should have liked Adela to marry the superannuated old sinner; he never put a finger on a horse in his life."

"A failing, certainly," smiled Arthur, "suggestive of an unpardonable sordidity of mind. I should like to meet your friend, Falkland, very much. I know a Mr. Percy Falkland, but cannot be the same."

"Perhaps it may."

"He would not be a suitor to your sister if were."

"Why?"

"I will tell you when we meet," said Arthur leaving the junior Millard hopelessly mystified "and you may expect me to-morrow."

He had better have gone that day, for on the day Adela received Percy's letter, and in the agony of her fear at an impending separation she wrote in most endearing terms, imploring him not to go without seeing her again.

"You can steal down quietly," she wrote, "and be in the lane at the end of the garden if you do not wish to be seen. Let me know the worst from your own lips, and be assured, Percy, that whatever be the nature of your trouble, it will never take my love from you. Come."

And, like the traitor that he was, he went with the bitter letter to Fanny in his pocket, for he had not posted it yet. He went down at an appointed time; and Adela, hearing a preconcerted signal, opened the garden door and went out into the lane. It was in the dusk of the evening, and they were quite alone.

Percy was very pale. He felt like the wretched criminal he was, when the girl's pure kisses fell upon his perjured lips, and in the depth of her faith she told him that she was sure he had done no wrong.

"If the whole world told me so," she said, "I would not believe."

He had not the courage to tell her the truth.

Passion made him selfish, sinful, and he tempted the girl to sacrifice herself on the altar of her love.



"I never can be happy in England," he said, "I cannot tell you the nature of the trouble that has fallen upon me; but, Adelaide, if you were mine, and we were far away, the future would be all our own."

She looked at him timidly, not quite comprehending him.

"Must I go alone?" he pleaded, while the fair and plaintive face of Fanny rose before his mind, and reproached him with sorrowful eyes. "Will you come with me, Adelaide?"

"How can I, Percy? Why should there be this dreadful secrecy?"

"When you ask me that," he said, in accents of despair, "I must be dumb and bear my lot with resignation. Confide in me now, dear Adelaide, and your devotion will be well repaid."

"Yes, you will love me always," she said, trustfully; "but then my friends, my mother—can we not confide in her?"

"In no one."

He worked upon her feelings by making the secret seem much more desperate than it was.

"Not even for the sweet pleasure of seeing you must I risk a second visit here."

Then he added,—

"But you will come to me!"

Before she could answer, an interruption came and startled them. The strong, hard voice of Mr. Millard called his daughter by name.

He was unconsciously playing the part of guardian angel.

Percy kissed her hastily, and fled before the door was opened, or Adelaide had replied. The girl turned a perfectly serene countenance to her father.

"You were talking to someone," he said, looking round suspiciously. "I heard Falkland's voice, I fancy. He has no occasion to come sneaking after you in that manner, when my front door is always open to him."

Adelaide tapped him playfully on the arm.

"We enjoy a few stolen moments to ourselves out of the regular way, papa; and you should not interfere."

"I suppose not," he growled, satisfied with her frankness. "Young people in love are always more or less idiotic. Is he coming back?"

"I don't know, papa; but I think not. He was just telling me about some business in town when you came."

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### AT DINNER.

HAD Percy ever stayed to reflect he would have been startled to see how rapidly he had permitted himself to drift into evil ways, sacrifice principle and honour under the temptations of his passion and his vanity.

The worst feature in his case was that he began to extenuate himself, justify his conduct by a wretched sophistry that only makes his conduct worse.

His marriage with Fanny—the turning point of his life—had disappointed him.

He had never been a hero or a saint, and he had never professed to be either.

He found vice easy, and in some things pleasant; so, being controlled by no religious scruples, he grew vicious in his youth.

He had always plenty of ready money at command. There was a laxity of parental authority and example on the one side of duty and respect on the other.

If an escape of Percy's ever came under the builder's notice the builder said he was sowing his wild oats, and would be better for it in the long run.

It did not matter to the builder who suffered in that long bad run of Percy's. So that the son did not commit himself in any discoverable way the father was content to supply him with money, and let him go his own road.

What if he broke a heart or two, or brought shame and sorrow to a humble hearth? Other gay young men of money did the same, and Percy was no worse than the rest.

So reasoned the old man.

But in spite of Percy's weakness he had an innate longing for the good. He had an instinct that made him desire to change the society of dissipated men and dissipated society in general for the quiet of a home and the companionship of a wife.

Had it not been for that unhappy *contretemps* in Maple-street—the fatal kiss on which he built such a sad groundwork of jealousy and doubt and misery—the whole current of his life would have been changed, and he would have been a better man.

As it was, he went back to worse than the old state of feeling;—he grew reckless, desperate, cynical, went back to the old stupid, wrong belief that there was no honesty in men or faith in women.

"Henceforth," he said in his selfishness, "let the motto be, 'myself.' Life is a game between the deceiver and the deceived. I have been disappointed once where I most trusted, where I most believed."

He did not pause to think that while he thus sacrificed his own soul he lured a true and trusting woman to the immolation of hers.

The wild and wicked idea in his brain was to elope with Adelaide—keep her to the last in ignorance of the tie that bound him to another, and trust to the future for her forgiveness.

"Why should my life be a desolate one," he said to himself, "because the law will not give me release from a woman who has wronged me? Adelaide loves me, and I love her. Are we to study the opinions of a world whose opinions would doom us to eternal separation?"

And then he wrote to her again, imploring her to come to him, if but to speak to him for the last time. He said he must leave England on the morrow.

"She will come," he thought. "She will come, and then, in the pain of parting, she will forget all except her love for me. I shall be able to persuade her to accompany me at once. I am sure I shall."

Beyond that he did not think. Whether his father would forgive him or not was a matter of doubt; but with some few hundred pounds in his pocket and the prospect of having a beautiful girl to be the companion of his journey, he did not care to reflect. He went on with blind fatuity to his fate.

Mr. Wilson went down to dine at Penge. The Millards made great preparations for him, and invited the Falklands to meet him; but Percy was reported to be in town on important business, and the builder, from motives of policy, made his daughters decline the invitation.

Millard was not satisfied with the conduct of his prospective son-in-law. He was a keen man of the world, and he did not like the aspect of things in general. To him it seemed that Percy was keeping, or was being kept, out of the way.

"If I find anything of that kind going on," said Mr. Millard, "I will make him pay for it. Adelaide has his letters, and I will sue him for breach of promise. He is rich, and the damages would be heavy."

He questioned Adelaide, but her answers and her manner puzzled him. He knew more of Mammon than he did of Love; was better acquainted with the mysteries of finance than with the heart's tender sympathies.

"How do you find Falkland?" he asked, in his usual abrupt way. "Is he as attentive as ever?"

Miss Millard coloured painfully under the hard stare and direct question.

"Quite, papa—more so, if possible."

"Why don't he come, then? He has changed lately in a way I don't like," said Mr. Millard, almost savagely. "There's a restraint in his father's manner, and Percy himself is never visible. I don't like it. You haven't been trifling with him, I hope?"

"I love him too well to trifle with him," she said, simply; "and he loves me more than ever."

Millard was partly satisfied then. He was sure that his daughter would be the best judge.

"Only if you think he is playing fast and loose," he suggested, as a matter of prudence,

"you had better begin to look elsewhere. There's a gentleman coming to-day to dinner—Mr. Wilson. He is a rising man, and worth cultivating. I know of no one in the City who would be more useful to me, if he were not troubled with an excess of something he calls principle," Millard added, aside. He never let the questionable part of his character peep out at home—there he was irreproachable.

Miss Millard and Arthur met at dinner. They liked each other at the first glance. Arthur fancied that Adelaide bore some resemblance to Fanny, not so much in the contour of face and figure as in the expression.

Adelaide was very beautiful—more cultivated than Fanny; but Arthur was true as yet to his dream. Others might be fairer, more accomplished, richer—but there was only one Frances in the world.

"I am sorry that our friends the Falklands could not come," said Millard, in the course of dinner. "I should like you to have met them."

"I should have liked it too. I am curious to see one of the gentlemen."

"Which?"

"Mr. Percy."

"The elder Mr. Falkland is the celebrated builder and contractor," said Mr. Millard; "and Percy—who I may as well tell you is engaged to my daughter, Adelaide—distinguished himself by conducting the Horse Chess railway contract."

"Then it must be the same. I must have a few words respecting him after dinner," said Mr. Wilson, gravely—"and in private."

Millard began to have a misgiving that all was not well. Adelaide looked at the grave and handsome countenance of her father's guest, and she went very pale. "Perhaps," she thought, "this gentleman knows something that will injure Percy, or bring danger to him."

## CHAPTER XLV.

### IN DANGER.

THE ladies retired to the drawing-room when dinner was over, and Mr. Millard produced some of the wine that was the pride of his cellar and the delight of those who drank it at his table.

But Mr. Wilson was profoundly indifferent to the merits of Amontillado or Moselle, and it mattered little to him just now whether he drank the nectar of Olympus or the chief abomination of the Cape and the tavern.

His mind was on matters of deeper, graver import. He had been attracted to Miss Millard during dinner; he could not help fancying that she bore some shadowy resemblance to Fanny—a resemblance that existed in certain expressions of the eye and in certain tones of the voice, and it needed that she should have only the very faintest resemblance to enlist Arthur's fullest sympathies in her behalf.

Arthur cracked a deulutory fibert and sipped his wine by way of doing honour to Millard's hospitality. He tried to be interested in the fast talk of the Millards junior, and the mercantile detail of the Millard senior; but it was all dreariness to him,—his heart was full of pity for Adelaide, whose dream it was his painful duty to break.

"You were saying something about Falkland," said Millard, when the last anecdote of Sydney's—a well-told Derby-day adventure—failed to elicit a smile from their guest. "Is it a serious matter?"

Arthur assented silently and looked at the two sons. Millard saw what he meant.

"Mr. Wilson and I will join you presently," he said. "We have a little private business to arrange."

The young men took the hint and retired; not, however, to the drawing-room. An eight-foot billiard table in the spare apartment had more charms for them than the society of mother or sister upstairs; and in less than five minutes they had their sleeves rolled up and were playing for half-crowns like mortal enemies.

"That private business is something about Falkland," said Sydney Millard, "and something

serious too, for a wager. I fancy he has been queer lately."

The brother was too intent on a stroke for him to pay much interest to Falkland or anyone else. Not that he was heartless, but the habits of his class had given him a very thick veneer of selfish thoughtlessness.

"I have undertaken this task with a degree of pain," said Arthur, when Mr. Millard and he were alone, "and it has become more painful since I have seen your daughter. Is she much attached to Mr. Falkland?"

"Very much. She has never flirted much; we have kept her at home, and, with a girl brought up as she has been, love strikes deeply. Yes; she is very fond of Mr. Falkland."

Arthur sighed in sympathy.

"What was there in that heartless, handsome profligate," he wondered, "that should make women like him as they did, while other and better men hungered for pure affection?"

"You are keeping me in suspense," said Millard. "I am anxious to know what it is."

"Simply this. Percy Falkland is already married."

The City gentleman, who prided himself on his self-possession, was startled out of it this time. He felt to the full the bitter insult, the wrong, the degradation offered to his child. Hard as he was—unprincipled as he might be in business—he had a father's love and pride for his daughter—a man's dignity and honour in the purity of his household.

"No!" he said, as if with the word he would have driven away the statement he believed.

"Married!"

"Married," was the grave reply. "I have not made the assertion without due consideration, and without perfect knowledge of its truth."

Mr. Millard bowed. After the first shock he knew what was expected of him.

"I am perfectly prepared to accept any statement of yours as simple truth," he said, "as any one who knows you must do."

"You shall have the whole story in detail," said Arthur, bowing in acknowledgment of the compliment. "It is only just to Mr. Falkland that you should."

"Nothing can extenuate his rascality," said Millard, between his hard white teeth. "If, when he paid attention to my daughter he was aware that his wife existed. Was he aware of that?"

"He was aware of it."

"Then he is a scoundrel!" The City man was above emotion. It was out of his way; but his voice faltered with the last few words. "I am not used to saying much in the style of sentiment, Mr. Wilson, but I tell you I feel for the poor girl. I don't know how to break this to her."

"It is a delicate and a painful thing to do. It would not be wise to let her know the whole of his treachery at the outset. It must be broken to her gently."

"What can he have intended," Millard said, "to seek my daughter in such a way? Cowardly, daring miscreant! By Heavens, Mr. Wilson, there are some things that the law does not make allowance for, and this is one of them."

"The law does not acknowledge as a reality the sad reality that women feel," said Mr. Wilson.

"The blight of sweet and tender hope—the filling of a heart with misery. I will tell you what I know of Percy Falkland. You can judge better of his conduct then."

Millard set his teeth on his nether lip, and prepared to listen with all the patience his indignation would permit, and Arthur told him the whole story faithfully, concealing nothing.

He spoke of his own affection for Fanny while she was in Paxton-street, and before he knew she was a wife.

Millard, though a man of the world, with the faintest possible belief in sentiment, believed him. There was the pure truth of pure manhood in every word.

When Arthur came to the simple process by which he discovered the marriage, Millard looked at him with admiration; when he told of the parting in the passage at Maple-street, Millard

looked at him in doubt—only a momentary doubt, however.

"It was indiscreet on my part, but I had grown fond of her," said Arthur, simply. "There had been throughout a latent suspicion that she was a poor, betrayed one—lost by the very intensity of her faith, and I would have won her back to peace and goodness. The memory of that feeling was in my heart when I kissed her as we said farewell."

"And for that—only that, did he discard her?"

"Only that."

"Selfish wretch! He might have known that the girl who could guard her secret so well—at the cost of her mother's pain—her own apparent shame—her father's sorrow—would not be false to him. I see the case more clearly now. He felt that she would never betray him, and so he took, or meant to take, advantage of that self-sacrifice—leave her to a lifetime of suffering, and marry my child."

"There you have the truth, Mr. Millard, and now you know the whole story. To the very last the poor girl implored my mother not to come down here and give the truth out; but we felt that the honour of your daughter was at stake, and so we did our duty."

Millard wrung his hand.

"I thank you," he said. "Do you think the father knew of this?"

"Not till my mother came, and then there was a very pitiful scene, for the old man turned upon his son."

"For what?"

"Not because he had done a wrong," said Arthur, with more bitterness than was customary to him, "but because he had done the best act of his life. He pointed to the door, and told Percy not to return until he was free from Frances. You see, Mr. Millard, the intention."

The City man did see. He was hard in his belief, hard in his dealings with the world, but he could not sympathize with the elder Mr. Falkland's feeling when that feeling prompted him to discard his only son unless his son discarded the woman he had taken to his heart, and made his wife.

"No," he said emphatically; "if either of my sons made such a choice, and even if the girl were not such a one as you describe, I should be rather glad than sorry. I would do my best to give him a fair start in the world, and let him do the best for himself then. I begin to see how that the son's folly—his wicked folly—grew in the father's weakness."

Certainly, if Mr. Millard had no sentiment, he was gifted with common sense.

To do him justice, Millard's chief anxiety was for Adelaide. Hard and worldly as the man was he could feel for her.

He knew what a bitter shock it would be to find that the man she loved so fondly was unworthy.

"I dare not tell her the whole truth," he said. "She is proud, and will feel it too keenly—the possible shame—the degradation that would have fallen upon her had the scoundrel fulfilled his purpose."

"And she loves him!" said Arthur; "she who is so beautiful, and so like Fanny!"

Millard heard him, and did not forget what he heard.

"I shall look upon you as the saviour of my child," he said, taking Mr. Wilson's hand again. "Remember that you are always welcome here. Do not mind if you find Adelaide strange, and perhaps bitter at the outset. Such a dream as hers breaks with much pain, and she will not yet awhile forget that you have broken it."

Mr. Wilson saw the truth of that. It seemed fated that he who lived a good life, did his duty with homage to his Maker, with gentlest reverence to women and manliness to men, should be misunderstood, and have the worst construction put upon his best intentions.

"Yes," he said, with a silent sigh, "I suppose it will be so, Mr. Millard; but your daughter will thank me in the days to come—when she sees what I have saved her from."

"Of that we are quite sure; and I shall never forget what you have done for me. Should it

ever be in my power to do anything for you by word or deed—we are City men, and we understand each other—you know where to find me, Mr. Wilson—at my office, or here at home."

Many a year had gone since Mr. Millard, the man who was spoken of on 'Change as "keen as a needle," had given way to such an open-hearted gush of friendship as that; but the hardest men, the men who are made sceptical and suspicious by experience, respect and welcome truth and simple honour.

The two gentlemen sat together for a long time after this. Wilson was glad to see that the disappointment was not, apparently, a very serious one to his host.

Millard felt the insult more than he felt the loss.

The better instincts of the man were touched now that he saw how much he had risked by beginning with more regard to his own self-interest than to his daughter's happiness.

He drew a mental contrast between the suitors he had chosen for his daughter and the man before him.

There was Mr. Vitey, who was old enough, and more than old enough to be Adelaide's father. Then there was Percy, and Millard shivered when he thought what might have happened through him.

He turned from his mental view of them to look at Arthur Wilson, and his heart told him that there was a man who was worthy of the fair girl whose happiness Percy had so nearly wrecked.

Millard knew exactly what Arthur's position was—two hundred and thirty pounds a year, on a progressive scale—not a large income to a man who had ambitious views for his daughter, but Mr. Millard was wise enough to look into the future.

"Here," he thought, "is a man who will rise. He has the quiet strength—the strict integrity that, after all, the worst of us respect, and most rely on. He is careful, provident—a gentleman to the core."

Out of this thought others grew. Adelaide, bitter as she might feel at first, would see in time what Arthur had done for her, and then gratitude must come—after gratitude, love.

Millard's reflections, sensible and practical as they were, had their sentiment. He wanted a rich husband for his daughter, but he did not want to sacrifice her to a rich husband. He had made money, and though he wanted more, he could do without it.

Arthur was handsome, courtly, gentle. He was a man who, of all men, could love a woman well.

He was merciful to her human side, revered the angel in her nature. It was the father, and not the man of business that spoke, when Millard said to himself,—

"I would rather give Adelaide to Arthur Wilson, even if he were poor, than I would give her to Percy Falkland with ten thousand a year."

He did not say this with the feeling of the fox when he found the grapes out of his reach. Men who only see their fellow-men in the city do not know how much home tenderness exists behind the desk and ledger.

The men who fight the strongest battle in the world's great strife are those who fight for the freeds and those around it.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### STILL CONFIDING.

BEFORE the two gentlemen went to the drawing-room Arthur had prevailed upon Mr. Millard not to tell Adelaide the whole of Percy's treachery. He had heard that she had a religious sense of duty, and would abide by her father's decision.

"Tell her kindly that you have unmistakable proofs of his unworthiness," said Arthur; "but do not tell her the entire truth. She would feel it too keenly; her very soul would revolt from him; every delicate instinct of her nature would be outraged, and I should fear the consequences of the reaction on herself."



"Yes, you are right," said Millard; "it is best to tell her simply that she must forget him—a thing easy enough to tell a girl, but very hard for a girl to do; but Adelaide is proud, and will value the fellow at his worth."

They went to the drawing-room, and both were calm. The anxious glance Adelaide flashed upon their faces read nothing to verify her misgiving, and she returned to her piano. She had just finished the first verse of a favourite song of Percy's, and began the second.

"Play something else, my love," said Millard. "You have plenty of prettier music."

The exceptional kindness of his tone brought the old misgiving back again, and her fingers trembled on the keys.

"What shall I play, papa, dear?"

"I do not know what music Mr. Wilson prefers."

"The simplest," said Arthur, in answer to Adelaide's look of inquiry. "Do you know 'Auld Robin Gray'?"

The bright head bowed an assent. Arthur went to her side, and assisted her to find the song. She could sing to him with pleasure now, since she felt that he had not injured her Percy.

"You are like papa," she said, with a smile that reminded him of Fanny more and more. "He is fond of those quaint old ditties. He especially delights in 'John Anderson, my Jo,' and I do detest singing it."

"I like the old song, too."

Singularly enough Fanny had sung it to Arthur and his mother many a time when they had their happy days in Paxton-street, and so here was another link between Fanny and Miss Millard. Arthur's liking for her began to increase.

She sang "Auld Robin Gray" with all its plaintive pathos, and then others followed; then they gave a duet.

Arthur had a rich and mellow baritone voice of peculiar power and sweetness, and it blended well with Adelaide's in a melody from *La Favorita*.

The junior Millards left the billiard-table, and stole in quietly to hear the music.

Millard, senior, watched them with pleasure. They were evidently taking a liking to each other. They sang together with perfect harmony, and if there had been no sympathy between them they could not have done that.

It began to rain heavily before Arthur rose to depart; and then it was found that there would be no train for an hour.

Arthur seemed troubled at that. He did not see how he could get home, and he knew his mother would be anxious.

"If it is important that you return to-night," said Mr. Millard, seeing the troubled look, "my brougham is at your service; otherwise, you had better stay, and we will have a rubber at whist."

Arthur's good nature fought with his inclination. He thought of the coachman and the horse when he contemplated the long journey in the wet at a late hour of the night, and he was sure that his mother, with the natural good sense that made her admirable, would infer that he had stayed at Fenge.

The rain fell heavier, and there was a storm. The rain fell after the storm went down, and there was no promise of cessation, so Arthur accepted the friendly invite.

He liked the household better as he became acquainted with it. Even the junior Millards were tempered in tone and feeling as the hours wore on in the quiet of home, and the outside world was shut out by a curtain and door.

When Adelaide retired for the night her father followed her, as she feared he would. The slight cloud upon him—the restraint perceptible only to the delicate instinct of her love warned her that the peril to Percy was not over yet; and though she was conscious of her father's purpose in rising when he did, she tried to hurry into her room to escape from him, lest she should hear anything against Percy.

But Millard called her to him.

"Adela!"

"Papa, dear!"

"Come here a moment."

She went. It was not his habit to do more than kiss the soft cheek put up for his kiss at the good-night; but now, outside her chamber,

he put his arm round her and kissed her twice very tenderly.

"I have bad news to tell you, my child, but you will bear it bravely. It is almost what I feared."

It was what she had feared, too; and she shivered while her heart clung to Percy Falkland.

Had he not told her everything, and this was but the substance of the shadow.

"What is it, papa?"

"You must think no more of Mr. Falkland. Don't tremble, pet. You must forget him. I will not, for your sake, say hard words of him."

"Don't, please. I think I know."

"No, my darling, you don't know; and I need say no more than that I have good reason to say this. You are sure I should not speak without good reason."

"Quite sure," and she shivered again. Then she asked, with some slight bitterness, "Who has told you?"

"Mr. Wilson. And believe me, Adela, he is a gentleman to whom we owe our deepest gratitude, for he has saved you from much misery."

Her eyes filled with tears. She drooped her head, and went into her room. And what wonder if the poor girl felt angry with Arthur for having spoken ill of Percy, when she felt that whatever Percy had done she could forgive him. So she thought in her innocence—never thinking that his crime was so grave.

"Forget him," said her father at the last.

"Promise me, Adela."

"Yes, papa, I will."

And they parted so. Adela threw herself upon the bed and wept. It might be true that Mr. Wilson had saved her from much misery; but then in the saving he had caused her more.

And why should she believe them when Percy's handsome face, full of despairing love, as she had last seen it, haunted her, and she remembered his last words,—

"You will come to me!"

In the solitude of her chamber Adelaide made a rash resolve. She would go to him, and see him once more; ask him to tell her what was the dreadful thing that threatened to separate them. It would be easy to steal away in the morning.

She could make a pretext of going to see a lady friend in the neighbourhood—take train to London—see Percy, and return in two hours or so.

And with that resolve she went to sleep—the thought of Percy in her soul, while the evening prayer was on her tongue.

And the man, whose image interrupted her pure prayer, was then in the heat of a fierce orgie, drinking hard with dissolute acquaintances and talking in a way that would have made her shudder, had she heard him.

Sleep did not come to her that night. She rose early, still full of her intent, and dressed herself for the journey, leaving nothing to put on but her mantle and bonnet.

Adelaide was in the habit of making morning calls, so her parents were not surprised to see her attired, or to hear that she was going out.

Percy's letter—the one that he had written, imploring her to come to him—was in her hand, and she was in the breakfast-room alone, reading it, when Arthur Wilson entered. He saw by the glance she gave him, the involuntary shrinking, that she knew whom she had to thank for her father's resolve that Percy must be forgotten.

Arthur Wilson never liked to rest under a false impression; and he already experienced so sincere a regard for Adela that it pained him to see her shrink away. He approached her.

"Believe me," he said, with grave tenderness, "I was deeply pained to have to be the bearer of ill tidings, but I could not bear to let the sacrifice be made. I know I have incurred your displeasure—your dislike; but you will forgive me later when you know my motive and me."

"Why did you come?" she said, indignant in her sorrow. "They need never have known."

In the next moment she was sorry. The pale and noble countenance bent over her impressed

her with the idea that there was something in Percy's conduct graver than she knew. His words impressed her still more.

"I came to save you, Miss Millard," he said, sadly; "and sorry as I am to find that you shrink from me I feel that I have done my duty."

"But you speak ill of Percy."

"Not ill—only the truth. I told the whole story, and did my best to extenuate him."

"Did you? I am glad you did that;" and Miss Millard took Arthur's hand gratefully. She began to understand him now. "I am sure if you told only the simple truth they will pity more than blame him. Don't you think so?"

(To be continued.)

## AS IT FELL UPON A DAY.

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### CHAPTER XXVII.

ELEANOR FOSTER had grown decidedly better and stronger after her migration to Silchester and the work Anne found for her.

She knew now that life for her with Rachel would never come again; but she no longer grieved over this; indeed, since Rachel's loving letter had been put into her hands Eleanor seemed to grow, in a sense, content. She had feared she had lost Rachel's love altogether, and as she said to Anne,

"If this had happened believe me I do not know how I should have faced my life in the future."

"Rachel has a trick of making everyone fond of her," Anne had answered, gently, "and I quite understand your feelings; but, I assure you Rachel cares for you now more than she ever did."

Eleanor had never questioned Anne as to all that had happened to make such a terrible difference in Lady Castletown's manner towards her, or why Rachel had left her for a whole week without attempting to discover what had become of her, and Anne, on her side, had a natural disinclination to speak of the mistaken idea that had taken such miserable hold of poor little Rachel's mind; but after they had been in Silchester some little while Anne noticed that Eleanor, though better, seemed restless and ill at ease.

"You are not to work too much," she said, chidingly, on one occasion when she paid a long visit to the house in the village where Eleanor lodged. It was an evening, dull, stormy looking. Eleanor's pale face flushed at Anne's words.

"The work does not hurt me," she said, and then she paused in a painful hesitating way. "I did not know," she added, after that pause, "I—had no idea, Miss Huntley, till I came here, that Corby Court was so near to Silchester."

Anne's brows contracted a little.

"The Hamilton family is not there now," she answered. "I believe the place is sold. It seems a sad thing. I read of poor Mrs. Hamilton's death in the paper this morning. I don't think she had ever recovered herself since so much misfortune has fallen upon them." Anne paused. "Are you afraid of meeting Captain Hamilton?" she asked then, very gently.

Eleanor said "Yes," in a whisper.

Anne's eyes filled suddenly with tears; she knew by the sound of that one whispered word all the anguish and sorrow that was stored up in Nell's heart where this man was concerned. She rose and touched Eleanor's bowed head, gently.

"You need not be afraid, dear," she said, "he will never come near you. I heard from Bastian that he was gone abroad to escape financial difficulties, and I, though I was sorry for his mother's sake, I also rejoiced, for you know I have shrank from your doubts about Rachel's safety with this man."

Eleanor paused a moment.

"I wish I could feel she was quite quite safe," she said in a whisper after this. "You don't know him—he is so wicked, so clever."

Anne walked to and fro in the little room. Eleanor's perturbation touched her deeply.

"I think you are wrong to doubt still," she said in a few moments; "and, Eleanor, I am going to say something else. You are wrong to let yourself dwell too much on your own sad experience of this man's character. I wish," Anne paused. "Will you never be able to give poor Philip any hope, Eleanor?" she asked, her voice soft almost to tenderness.

Eleanor shivered.

"Oh! never, never! Do not ask this—do not suggest it!" she cried, half passionately. She was standing near the window, her eyes and voice were full of tears. "I love him far too well," she said faintly when she could speak again clearly, "I must never wrong him."

"But it is no wrong to give him happiness. He loves you so deeply, and you are not deceiving him, Eleanor. He knows."

"He knows nothing definitely—yet he must guess all," Eleanor said in a voice that was full of pain, "and he must have suffered. Poor Philip, oh! he is so good—and yet," she added swiftly with a shudder, "yet I pray from my heart he may never, never know the full truth. I—I should fear. Oh! I cannot bear to think of what might happen if he knew the truth!"

Anne wisely changed the conversation.

"Tell me how you got on with the class to-day. I have been hearing such nice things about you, Eleanor," she said, and after half-an-hour's chat on village subjects she said good-bye, and rose to go.

Despite her cheery words and manner, Anne's thoughts were troubled ones as she walked through the well-known village.

It was not merely sincere sympathy that she felt for Eleanor. She was weighted with a presentiment, with a sort of heaviness of heart.

She could not tell why, exactly, but a sort of yearning came over her all at once to see Rachel. She felt she should be comforted if she could hear her sister's pretty voice, and look upon the delicate loveliness of her face and form.

It seemed to her suddenly too long a time since she had seen Rachel.

"I think I will go down to Nestville to-morrow," she said to herself hurriedly. "I don't believe it is so good for Rachel to be there all alone. Oh! to know that the child was Bastian's wife. I should be another creature; she is so unutterably dear, but she is such a care in her present independent state. Eleanor has infected me with her fear," Anne added, half impatiently, "it is natural she should credit this man with more power for doing harm than he can possess; but still, he is harmful, if only because he knows how to take advantage of Rachel in her reckless moods. Perhaps there may be a letter from the child to-night. She has not written for several days."

Anne was restless and almost unhappy till she had reached the rectory. She was late for dinner, and she saw by the butler's face that her uncle was not in the best of humours.

This was a fact that never disturbed Anne, save in as far as it affected Bastian's mother, and to-night it had no weight with her at all.

"The lesters, Sargent?" she asked hurriedly of the butler; "the last post has come!"

"Yes, miss; nothing for you," was the man's answer.

Anne got through her toilette for dinner in a dreamy, pre-occupied way, and she sat through the dinner eventually in the same troubled fashion, quite oblivious of her uncle's frigid manner, and for once of Mrs. Langridge's timid eager attempts to make conversation.

As the rector rose to leave the table Anne awoke out of her thoughts.

"I shall not be able to attend the meeting to-morrow morning, Uncle Hubert. I am going to London."

"Going to London!"

The rector forgot his ill-humour in his surprise.

Mrs. Langridge repeated the words after her husband.

"Yes, I want to see Rachel very particularly," Anne explained.

"But Rachel is not in London, I understand," observed the Rev. Mr. Langridge stiffly.

"I have not heard from her for several days, and I feel anxious, I don't know why," Anne said a little hurriedly, "as she has not written from Nestville I have an idea she has returned to London; in any case I shall go and see Bastian and find out from him how Rachel is."

"I have ceased to expect anything from Rachel—even ordinary civility," the Rector said loftily, and Anne could not refrain from smiling as she remembered how carefully Rachel had abstained from responding to any of her uncle's monetary desires, "and I must say, Anne," he continued, a little severely, "by this time I should have imagined that you would know your sister better than to expect much thought or affection from her. Be quite sure that if your sister had need of you she would write quickly enough. I do not approve of this journey to London, but you are your own mistress in this matter, so my opinion will not be likely to hold very good with you. I have, however, one subject on which I want to speak to you without delay. I have no doubt you know already what this subject is!"

Anne looked at the plump selfish face of the man before her. However much he impressed others by his distinguished bearing and fluent manner the rector of Silchester had never deceived either of his nieces for one single instant.

"Yes," Anne said after that pause. "Yes, Uncle Hubert, I believe I can guess what you want to say to me. It is something about Miss Foster, is it not?"

Mr. Langridge drew himself up to his full portly height.

"I object to Miss Foster coming here at all, and I object emphatically you understand, Anne, to her being given any post in my parochial matters. You have done a very wrong thing indeed in introducing this class of young woman into the parish at all. Of what use all my struggling to keep a high standard of morality among my parishioners if my own niece not only permits a woman with a stain upon her name and honour to come into our midst, but insists on publicly befriending her and giving her employment! Miss Foster must go, and go at once, Anne. Had I known anything about her I should never for one moment have permitted her to stay even for a day in Silchester."

Anne stood very white and still facing her uncle.

"The charity of Christ does not preach such a cruel doctrine as this, Uncle Hubert," she said, very quietly. "Are you, a servant, to show less mercy than your Master?"

The Rector grew crimson; his lips moved as if to speak, but he checked himself, and, turning, walked out of the room.

Mrs. Langridge was of course terribly upset; she shed many tears.

"Oh! my dear," she said plaintively, "you should not speak like that to your uncle. You have hurt him terribly I am sure, and you know, Anne, dearest, he is so good and—"

Anne soothed the gentle creature softly. She was more than unhappy now. She knew her uncle too well. All peace or chance of giving Eleanor a permanent home would be out of the question since the Rector had set his face against her.

Anne had feared this at the beginning; but she had jealously guarded Eleanor's secrets, and as she saw the poor girl was likely to be of great use to the parish, and consequently to her uncle himself, she hoped all would go well.

It was evident to her that someone or something had happened to enlighten the Rector on the subject of Eleanor.

Her aunt very quickly proved to her how right this theory was.

"I have been so unhappy about it all, Anne," she was saying in her weak gentle way. "I assure you I would not believe your uncle when he came in from his ride this morning and told me he had discovered a terrible story about poor Miss Foster. He was so very angry, Anne! It appears he was passing through Stradbury, when he met Captain Hamilton, who had come

down this morning to arrange about his poor mother's funeral, and they had a long conversation, in the course of which I suppose Captain Hamilton must have told your uncle all he knows about the poor girl. It seems that Rachel had to turn her out of the house. Is this true, Anne dear! and do you believe it?"

"I believe Eleanor Foster to be a sweet, good, pure woman," Anne cried, half fiercely. "Oh! Aunt Marian, my heart is too full to talk this over to-night. It is all so sad—so hopeless!"

She broke down for a moment, and sinking into a chair covered her face with her hands, but almost instantly Anne's courage and thought returned to her. She remembered her aunt, and how much such a scene as this would try her, being indeed something strange to the gentle, timid woman.

"Don't look so troubled, dearest," she said, rising and taking Bastian's mother in her arms. "I don't often break down, but I—I am tired to-night. I have had a long day, and I am disappointed at not hearing from Rachel. If there is no letter in the morning I shall run up to town and see Bastian."

Mrs. Langridge heartily seconded this idea. To her Bastian represented the fullest meaning of wisdom and comfort.

"Rachel is thoughtless sometimes," she said, "but Bastian will know all about her."

To herself Mrs. Langridge said with true womanly intuition,—

"This journey up to town will do Anne good. She is looking pale and tired, and she works so hard in the village. I think I shall write a line to Rachel and suggest that she asks Anne on a visit."

And then Mrs. Langridge sighed, for only she knew what a staff and a rod of strength Anne was in the Rectory household.

Anne spent a wakeful and troubled night. When she fell asleep she was haunted by the memory of Giles Hamilton's unprecedented cruelty to Eleanor, and with that persistent presentiment of evil that would hover over her thoughts of Rachel and this man. The news that Hamilton had been to Corby had taken her by surprise, and with the remembrance of what lay before her, where Eleanor was concerned, was a definite pain to her. In truth she had need of Bastian's advice. Kindly help and letter or no letter, she determined when the morning came she would fulfil her intention and go up to London.

She was dressed and away at an early hour. The post-bag had arrived, but there was nothing from Rachel.

The journey up to town had never before seemed so tedious to Anne. She felt as if she would never arrive.

She reached the City about twelve o'clock, and was driven instantly to Bastian's office. As she passed up the staircase she met Philip Robinson running down, evidently bent on an appointment outside.

At sight of Miss Huntley's pretty neat form Robinson flushed, and then grew ghastly pale.

"Eleanor," he said, almost inaudibly. His first thought was that the woman he loved was ill, or had need of him.

Anne took the young man's hand gently.

"Eleanor is better. I am come to see Mr. Lithgow, but I shall like to speak to you also Mr. Robinson, afterwards. Shall I find my cousin in his room?"

Philip turned instantly and led the way. He was trembling from the agitation of seeing Anne so unexpectedly.

The strain upon his nerves during the last few weeks had worked a great change in the young man.

He looked very ill; he had a distressed air. More than once complaints were brought to Bastian about this clerk, who had hitherto been an exceptionally good worker, and a valuable assistant to the firm.

Bastian Lithgow had listened to all there was to say against Philip Robinson in a quiet grave way.

He had almost winced when Eleanor's father came and denounced the young man to him.

"I think you will have to get rid of Robinson,



dir," John Foster had said, and not without grief, for Philip was dear to him. "He is completely changed. I cannot think what has come to the lad. There was no one in the firm a month or so ago who I would have trusted sooner than Philip; but he has fallen into bad hands, or bad ways, and I am afraid he is on the downward path altogether."

"And you think it wise and good of us, Foster, to help a man downwards, eh?" Bastian had asked, with a cynicism he did not feel.

Eleanor's father had shaken his head.

"Nay," he said, "but I think he should be taught a lesson, sir, if only for his mother's sake."

"Send him to me, I will speak to him," Bastian had replied, and he did speak, earnestly and gently, to the young man.

"I know you have a great sorrow, Robinson, but do not imagine you are the only one who has to go through life with grief eating into your heart. I want you to brace yourself up. Try and bury your unhappiness in your work. You need never fear harsh words from me. I listen to all there is to say against you, but I am always your friend, and I want you to turn round now and face your work and your future like a man. Believe me, trouble will disappear to a great extent with work."

He had wrung Robinson's hand heartily, and had put all the cordiality of which he was capable into his voice, and Philip had responded to his employer's kindness.

"I am very grateful to you, sir," he had said, and a dimness like tears had come into his eyes. "I will try, but, but—" he had broken off suddenly, "but I fear I am not like most other men, sir, forgetfulness will not come to me. I am not thinking of my own grief. It is of her I think—she is so dear to me—no words can tell you what Eleanor has always been to me, sir, and when I have such a picture of her before me as she is now, I feel as if I must go mad with the hopelessness of everything, the knowledge she is not only lost to me, but that life and life's happiness is lost to her. Bear with me still a little longer, sir. I will try—and if I fail—I will go for this will be no place for me."

This had passed between Bastian and the young man some days before this morning, when Anne arrived at the office.

Anne's quick sympathy went out utterly to Philip.

Now more than ever, since Eleanor could not remain in Solehester, she longed for a union between the poor girl and this man who loved her so well. Anne recognized Eleanor's delicacy of feeling, but she also recognized that it was possible that a time would come when the overwrought nervous system would be calmed, and then Philip's love might have some hope.

"Do not let me leave without seeing you again, Mr. Robinson," she said, as she reached the door of Bastian's room. "I shall be here some little time, so, perhaps, you can do what you have to do and come back."

Philip murmured something and turned away. "Poor fellow!" she said to herself sadly, for Philip's changed look touched her deeply.

Bastian gave a cry of astonishment, almost of delight as he looked up and saw Anne standing in his room.

He was not working, he had been sitting beside his desk gazing down on an open telegram.

"Anne! what brings you here?" he said as he took both her slim hands in his.

"I have come for several reasons—Rachel, perhaps, being my chief one," Anne said. Bastian looked at her eagerly.

"You have heard from Rachel this morning?" he queried.

Anne shook her head.

"Not for several days—that is why I am anxious. Of course it is silly of me to trouble about it; Rachel never does write except in an erratic manner; but still I have not altogether liked her silence. Where is she, Bastian—I mean is she still in Nestville, or has she returned to London?"

Bastian's face seemed to grow more haggard.

"I do not know where Rachel is, Anne, dear," he said very quietly, when he spoke, and with

that he took up the telegram from his desk and gave it to her.

"I have just received this from Rachel; it will convey nothing to you, Anne. It is my duty to tell you everything that has happened, so that you may see, and judge with me, how best we can act on Rachel's behalf!"

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANNE took the telegram from Bastian's hand almost mechanically, but thought became vivid, intense, as she read Rachel's telegram.

It bore the post-office stamp of Euston Station, and the date of the day before.

"It reached here yesterday afternoon after I had left the office. Had I received it," Bastian said, "it would have spared me one journey, at all events."

Anne did not make any reply.

She was reading through and through the message written on that thin telegram.

"Do not expect to hear from me for several days. My plans are quite undecided, but shall let you know eventually where I am. You will understand thoroughly why I have done this—Rachel."

Anne lifted her eyes at last towards the man sitting so wearily in the chair.

"What does the child mean, Bastian?" she asked gently. Nervous and anxious as she was herself she tried to disguise her own feelings to think of him.

He had a worn and wretched look. Evidently he had only just returned from this journey of which he had spoken.

Anne went across to him and put her hand on his shoulder.

"I shall never sneer at presentiments again," she said half lightly. "I felt I must come to town to-day, although I had nothing but fancy to go upon." She changed her voice here. "Tell me all there is to tell, Bastian, dear. What is wrong? What does Rachel mean by this telegram. Is—there trouble of any sort?"

"Ay," Bastian answered her bitterly. "There is real trouble, Anne. I promised the child I would keep her secret as long as I was able, even from you. She had such an awful horror of letting the world know the pitiful mistake she had made, and I—"

Anne put out her hand.

"Stop," she said feebly. "I—I am afraid to hear what you are going to tell me, Bastian."

She turned so white and faint she had to sink into a chair, and Bastian came and bent over her.

"Oh! I cannot breathe," Anne said in a whisper.

Somehow she had no need of his spoken words. She seemed to guess the real significance of his silence.

Bastian ministered to her gently. He brought her a glass of water and pushed open a door that led into another room.

"It is quite empty. Robinson is there as a rule, but I sent him out just before you came, Anne."

Anne sat helpless in the chair for a few minutes. There was something indescribably pathetic to Bastian in her collapse. She was, as a rule, so strong, so helpful.

She found her voice after a moment.

"She has married Giles Hamilton, you mean, do you not, Bastian? But how could she do this and why—why?" There was a broken cry in Anne's voice, then she calmed herself. "When did it happen, Bastian? The great shock is over now; I must hear everything. Oh! my poor, poor, unhappy little sister!"

Bastian gave her as quickly and as quietly as he could all the story of Rachel's reckless folly and misery.

"Had I gone to her with Eleanor Foster's story one day sooner she would have been saved! There is a fate in these things against which we cannot struggle, apparently."

Anne watched the man as he turned and walked to and fro in the room.

Her imagination quickly conjured up the picture of that morning in Rachel's boudoir

when the girl's bravado had fallen beneath the power and influence of her love. Her eyes filled with tears, she could so easily realise how a very tempest of anguish and shame had fallen upon Rachel in that moment.

"And you told her then about Eleanor?" Anne asked after a moment, "she had not had even an idea that it was Hamilton who—"

Bastian shook his head.

"It was a terrible shock to her, poor child!" he said, sadly.

"It seems so odd," Anne murmured almost to herself. "As once when I began to go into the subject I knew it could have been no one but Giles Hamilton who had ruined Eleanor's life. I never said this openly to Rachel. I thought it would come to her, too, when after—"

Anne paused.

Bastian half smiled.

"You need not mind saying it, Anne. She told me herself in that moment of truth between us how the odious suggestion of myself as that poor girl's destroyer had been put into her mind. It was *this*," Bastian added, in a low voice, "that has brought us all to where we stand to-day."

Anne moved aimlessly about the room.

"Bastian, what are we going to do? What is to be done? I do not yet understand the position fully. If you have this man in your power why has Rachel gone away from us in this manner? You say you insisted on Hamilton leaving England, and yet—?" Anne drew a deep breath, "he was in our neighbourhood yesterday; he came to Corby to arrange for his mother's funeral; he," she told him very hurriedly, almost in a whisper, all that Giles had done about Eleanor; "this was one of the reasons that brought me to you. Oh, surely, surely, Bastian, such a base cruel man as this must never be allowed to force Rachel into his life. It chokes me when I think of it. I broke down last night when your mother told me of the interview between Uncle Hubert and this coward. How little I knew then that my poor little Rachel had given herself into his power. I hated him for the wrong he has done to Eleanor and for the baseness of his nature; but now—now that I know all, I do not know what I feel! I suffer too much. Bastian, you love Rachel, can you not stand between her and this dreadful future?"

Anne broke suddenly into a flood of tears, and Bastian stood and looked at her—a man worn almost to desperation by the difficulties of the position.

In this moment of acute mental pain the senses of both were dulled, otherwise they must have caught the sound of someone breathing heavily in the adjoining room; they must have had the consciousness of a third presence.

Neither of them gave a thought to any such thing.

The fact of the open door did not come to their memories; they were both so lost in the whirl and troubled suffering of a heavy mental anguish. Bastian spoke first, his voice low and hollow.

"You wring my heart by such words, Anne," he said, hoarsely; "do you then know me so little? All that a man may dare to do I shall do in this crisis, for sooner would I stand and look upon my child's dead face than know that her pure soul had been allowed to be darkened and shadowed by that man's evil influence. Yes, all I can do I will. I went to her last night on purpose to secure her from him. You do not see the danger now. Have you not heard that Lendover is dead, and that all his wealth is bequeathed to this man? It was in the papers yesterday, and she must have read it, poor child, and have planned her flight instantly."

"She had not acted an hour too soon," Bastian continued, hurriedly, "for when I reached Nestville last night to find her gone I was in time to have an interview with Hamilton, who had come there immediately even with his dead mother not yet laid in her grave to commence his reign of triumph over Rachel."

The man suddenly sat down in a chair, his hands dropping between his knees, and Anne rose and came beside him.

"Tell me more," she whispered.



BASTIAN SUDDENLY SAT DOWN IN A CHAIR, HIS HANDS DROPPING BETWEEN HIS KNEES.

"We quarrelled, and I struck him. I do not think I hurt him, but he fell to the ground and my rage was so terrible I felt I dared not remain near him any longer. I walked in my misery along the shore to the town of Wavemouth, where I slept last night, and I returned to town this morning. I had prayed I might find some message from Rachel, and that telegram was waiting for me.

"It has comforted me a little—but oh! Anne, how am I to spare the mortification, the heart-anguish she will be called upon to bear from this man! He is determined to punish her, and if she will not meet him halfway he will publish her story throughout the world; he will put his case into the hands of the law. I am ready to lay down my life for Rachel. You know I have always loved her—but what will my love serve now! It may indeed harm her instead of being a shield and a protection."

Anne said nothing for many moments; she stood there, her hand resting on his shoulder.

"Can you make any guess as to where Rachel has gone?" she asked, after a long pause.

Bastian shook his head.

"None whatever. She is not alone. I should imagine she has taken Lucy wherever she has gone."

Anne paused again.

"She will be easily traced, Bastian!" she said, with half a query in her sad low voice.

He made a gesture of despair.

"A child like that against such a man!" was all he said.

Anne left his side and walked back to the place where she had sat, then she returned to him.

"I was wrong just now, dear," she said very gently; "it is not for you to fight this man and protect Rachel; it is my duty. Rachel is more to me than my sister, she is almost like my child. No matter what folly she has committed, I will do all in' my power to protect her—and when my heart is full of horror for what this man has done to poor Eleanor I feel strong enough to put him under my feet and crush him. Help me

only to meet him, Bastian. He must be back in London now again, since he must attend to the funeral affairs. I will write to him. I will see him."

Bastian looked up at her ; her voice was firm and calm, there was a dignity about Anne in this moment that was almost inspiring.

She was, as she had said herself, the proper person to stand forward openly on Rachel's behalf, and Bastian felt she would not fail.

"You are a brave true woman, Anne," he said, as he rose to his feet, "and you have right on your side."

"My heart is full of unutterable contempt for this creature," Anne said swiftly. "Could anything be more wantonly cruel than his last attack on poor Eleanor? Let us leave our own sorrow, Bastian, for a little while, and think of her. She will have to leave Silechester now—you know what Uncle Hubert is; he is very angry with me. I must find some haven for her. Shall I tell you my desire? Bastian," Anne said, half wistfully; "it is to see Eleanor safe in the care of a husband!"

"To marry, Philip!" Bastian said, almost sharply. "Ah! she will never do that, Anne! she is too proud."

"He loves her, Bastian."

"Yes; poor fellow, he loves her with all his heart and soul— and Eleanor, if she does not love him, has something more than affection for him; but she will never be his wife now, Anne—never, never!"

Anne sighed deeply.

"Life is sad and grey all round, just now," she said with quivering lips. "Bastian, can you drive with me? We must discuss immediate plans. I shall look to you to give me Hamilton's movements. I must speak to him—and oh! Bastian, so soon as Rachel lets us know where she is I must go to her! Come—I shall not return to Silchester till this afternoon; we can talk over everything before I go."

It was not till Anne was in a hansom being

driven westwards by Bastian that she remembered Philip Robinson.

"I asked him to come and speak to me ; he will think me very rude, Bastian, and yet since you have spoken so definitely it is, perhaps, as well I do not broach the subject of Eleanor to him."

"He has the subject on his brain, poor lad," Bastian said. "I have always sympathised with Robinson in this matter. He seemed to me the very husband for Eleanor Foster; but all is changed now, Anne. He is another man. He loves her, if possible, deeper than ever, but he has endured too much disappointment. I tell you frankly I should be grieved to let Robinson know the full truth. He has a strong element of foreign, almost savage, blood in his veins. Heaven knows what he would do if he were told the truth."

And while Bastian was speaking these words the horrible influence of this knowledge was working like a mad spirit in Philip Robinson's overcharged heart.

He sat in the smaller and inner room of Bastian's office; the light from the high window fell upon his face, and revealed the ghastly pallor that had crept under his sallow skin.

He had returned to the office, and gone to his usual place quite naturally.

Bastian and Anne were too deeply lost in their interview to hear him return, and he would have passed out again immediately had not the name of Eleanor fallen on his ears.

Some spirit seemed to spring to life within him and hold him rooted to the spot until all was said, and as Bastian and his cousin finally went away Robinson sat on thinking and thinking, dwelling on the story of shame and sorrow that stood like a phantom in his path, and stained for ever the sweet purity of the woman he adored.

(To be continued.)

FULLY one-third of the female population of France are labourers on farms.





A SPLENDID BRUNETTE DREW UP AND LOOKED AT BOTH MEN WITH CALMLY CRITICAL EYES.

## HATRED TURNED TO LOVE.

## [A NOVELETTE.]

## CHAPTER I.

"Nor love you—oh! Captain Vavasour!" And she lifted her lovely, reproachful eyes to the other's face. "I can't help myself."

"That is a real woman's reason," he answered, laughing; "which means it is no reason at all. Do you know why you love me?"

"No," replied Delia, hesitatingly.

She longed to say,—"Because you are so kind, and handsome, and quite different to any man who ever wooed me before," but she was too shy to manage such a long sentence, and, moreover, she had a feeling that if she said half what she felt it would sound like flattery.

"Well, then, shall I tell you!" he asked, taking her face between the palms of his hands and so lifting her lips to his.

"If you please."

"Because I love you, and there is a subtle sympathy between people under these circumstances which attracts heart to heart, soul to soul."

This was very fine Delia knew, but somehow it made her shyer than ever, because she did not understand it.

She was only a simple little country maiden, born a long way out of the great world whose wicked ways her companion knew only too well. She had all the grace and sweetness of a wild flower in the hedge, but there were heaps and heaps of things she did not know, and it was only when Captain Vavasour came to lodge at the farmhouse she recognised her ignorance and began to mind it. And now Delia would have given ten years of her innocent life to be a fine lady, and have creamy hands, flashing with diamond rings, and a waist that you could span. Only, she told herself, Captain Vavasour had

begun to love her as she was, and if she were different his love might be different too, so that it was as well to remain as she was.

Captain Vavasour had come to Dibthorp ostensibly to fish, and he certainly did pass several hours of each day stretched full length on the banks of the river, basking in the sun. If the float bobbed it went on bobbing until the fish had managed to get free again, for he never seemed to trouble about it, and Delia, who would steal out to keep him company when her work was done, would sometimes wonder why he put his rod in at all—just as she wondered why he had come to Dibthorp at all.

For it was not a lively place by any means, and what little distraction he might have had he did not seem to care about. Sir Charles Trevelyan, at the Hall, left his card, and Captain Vavasour waited until he had seen him drive past one day to return the visit, and declined the invitation to dinner that immediately followed.

Altogether he was an enigma to Mrs. Ambrose and her daughter, and fair Delia was becoming too much interested in the solution for her peace of mind.

Mrs. Ambrose had a pretty farmhouse just outside of the village. Her husband had left it to her unconditionally, and as she was a capable woman she at once took his vacant place, and carried it on so well that she was putting by a little every year for her two daughters.

Marah, the elder, who was clever, and had been well educated, passed a good part of the year in London with her godmother—a Mrs. Lane, the widow of a solicitor. She found Dibthorp dull, and liked chimneys, she said; whilst Delia, who loved flowers and animals, was glad to be with her mother, and once, when she went to stay in Blackenburg-square, in Marah's place, seemed so thoroughly wretched Mrs. Lane was thankful to see the last of her, and determined never to ask her again.

Mrs. Ambrose never despised any honest way of making money, and therefore she was glad to

let her pretty parlour and the best bedroom when she could find a lodger. Of course the furniture was not grand, but everything was so spotlessly clean and fresh, and Delia waited so pleasantly, and looked so pretty, she generally did get a lodger, and so added something to the little nest-egg accumulating for her girls.

But, of course, it was not in the programme that this lodger should flirt with Delia, and Mrs. Ambrose was so totally unprepared for any such contingency she was absolutely horror-struck when a neighbour told her one day she had seen Delia in the lanes with Captain Vavasour, and they looked exactly as if they were courting.

"Courting! Rubbish!" exclaimed Mrs. Ambrose in her quick, decided way. "It isn't likely that a gentleman such as he would care for a country girl like my Delia."

Nevertheless, directly she was alone with the girl she questioned her eagerly; and Delia, with tears and blushes, confessed that she loved Captain Vavasour with all her heart, and had reason to suppose he loved her.

"You foolish little girl," returned Mrs. Ambrose, with pain and dismay, "can't you see that he is far above such as us?"

"Yes, I know, mother, but gentlemen do sometimes marry girls who are not in their own position if they are very much in love; and Captain Vavasour isn't rich, or he would have a house, you know, instead of living in country lodgings."

"He may have some reason for keeping out of the way," answered Mrs. Ambrose, who made very shrewd guesses at times.

"Yes, I know; he told me about it," cried Delia, proud of the confidence reposed in her. "A horse of his ran for the Derby, and he had backed it heavily to win. Of course it didn't win—the favourite hardly ever does, he says—and he lost £10,000. His brother, who is awfully rich, paid it for him on condition that he would give up horseracing for the future, and, in disgust, he says, he came down here."

"What made him choose Dibthorp, I wonder?"

Delia blushed divinely up to the very edge of her pretty brown hair.

"He was staying at Blenstone, at the big hotel in the Market-place, and saw me, mother. He asked the waiter who I was, and found out we had lodgings, and thought he would come on to Dibthorp. He only meant to stay for a week; he thought he should be bored to death, but somehow," blushing again, "he has stayed three—"

"And employed the time in stealing your foolish little heart away," put in Mrs. Ambrose, looking at the girl tenderly, but regretfully. "Do you understand, child, that nothing but sorrow could come of such an attachment?"

"Why, if he loves me!" said Delia, softly.

"He is a man of the world, and though he might love you he would never marry you, dear. Supposing he did even make such a sacrifice, you would not feel at home amongst his people, and then he would get ashamed of his little country wife, and break your heart."

"Oh, mother! you don't know how good and nice he is!" exclaimed Delia, indignantly.

"I can understand that he seems all that to you, dear, and means, perhaps, now to be honourable; but of course his brother would expect to be consulted if he has paid his debts, and he would never consent to such a marriage."

Delia lifted her pretty head with a sort of defiance.

"Mother, I love him so. It would kill me not to believe in him; but I do—I do—with all my heart!"

"Has he ever spoken to you of marriage?"

"No; it was only yesterday he told me he loved me, although I guessed it before, of course."

"And that is all he ever will tell you, mark my words," responded Mrs. Ambrose, whom experience rendered prophetic. "A gentleman is ready to amuse himself with any girl, but when it comes to marriage he suddenly remembers his family, and heaps of other reasons why he shouldn't make her his wife. And so he quietly takes himself off—"

"Oh! mother!" interrupted Delia, with a shudder, "it is so cruel to talk like that."

"I am talking sense, dear," answered the elder woman, gently. "Isn't it a deal kinder to be candid with you than to let you go on hoping until you can't hope any longer?"

"What is it they say about living in hope and dying in despair?" said Delia, wistfully. "I hope that won't be my fate, mother."

"It needn't be, if you take warning in time. Never listen to any man, however honourable he may seem, who doesn't mention marriage in the same breath with love, because if he doesn't mean it at first you may be pretty sure he won't mean it later."

The tears began to gather fast in Delia's April eyes. Her mother's wisdom stabbed her like a sword. She could trust her lover "all in all," but it was terrible to her to hear that her mother, who was so much wiser than herself, trusted him "not at all."

"What is the use of telling me all this, now?" sobbed Delia. "I can't give up loving him now I have begun, can I?"

"Surely you could cast a man out of your heart the moment you felt sure he was unworthy of your regard!"

"No, I couldn't," answered Delia, positively.

Her mother looked at her keenly, and seeing she was sincere, a sort of fear took possession of her, and made her say, eagerly, impressively,—

"Delia, you must go away to London at once! How could I have been so blind and foolish to let matters go so far! I will speak to Captain Vavasour this very night, and give him a week's notice to leave, and meanwhile you shall go to Marsh, who is a girl of spirit, and will soon lecture you out of caring for a man who has no real regard for you."

"I love Marsh very dearly, but even she couldn't do that, now," answered the girl, sadly; "I take after you there, mother—if I once like them I like them for ever."

"I didn't mean in that sort of way, child; and you are very unlike me in one respect, for I

don't forgive easily; and I verily believe that if anyone tried to murder you one moment you would forget all about it the next."

"If it was anyone I loved."

"When a person has wronged you you ought to give up loving him."

"If you can."

"Nonsense! you always can, if you like," returned Mrs. Ambrose, who was a strong-minded woman, and had never been overtaken by a passion she could not master, like poor, tender, weak Delia. "There is only to make a strong effort. However, I shall see Captain Vavasour presently, and if he doesn't mean honourable by you out he shall go."

"Mother," said Delia, desperately, "will you do me one great kindness? Will you wait until to-morrow to speak to Captain Vavasour, and not send me away until Wednesday? I promise you faithfully I will go then, without a word, if you still wish it."

"Very well, then, it is a bargain," replied Mrs. Ambrose, who was not without a secret hope that she had misjudged Captain Vavasour, and he meant well after all. "But I won't wait a moment after to-morrow night."

"I won't ask you to," responded Delia, and then the front door-bell rang, and she hurried off, drying her eyes as she went.

## CHAPTER II.

"WHAT is the matter, Delia?" inquired Captain Vavasour, looking anxiously at her red eyes, as she slipped in shyly, with a letter on a tray, keeping her face as much averted as she could.

"Nothing," she sobbed out, and would have hurried away, only that he placed himself against the door and barred her exit.

"People don't cry for nothing," he said.

"Has your mother been scolding you?"

"No; she has only been telling me her mind," answered Delia, nervously.

"That is a distinction without a difference in most cases," he declared, cheerfully. "And I fancy it was in yours by your face. Won't you tell me all about it?"

"I can't, Captain Vavasour."

"That's nonsense, considering how confidential I have been to you. Besides, I must know, Delia, because if you are in any trouble perhaps I may be able to help you out of it."

Delia hesitated a long while, and then she blurted out impulsively,—

"Mother is going to send me away, because of you."

"Because of me?" flushing a little. "I thought I was such a very harmless individual."

"Mother thinks you are trifling," pursued Delia, who, now that the ice was broken, felt her courage revive a little.

"Then you have been telling her something, Delia?"

"No; somebody saw us together on Sunday afternoon and went and told mother."

"Let me see, what were we doing on Sunday afternoon, Delia?"

"We were walking in the wood together."

"Well, that was innocent enough."

"Yes, only you had your arm round my waist, you know," said Delia, blushing.

"Had I? I suppose I couldn't find a more comfortable resting-place for my arm; but it was very wrong of me to take such a liberty, and I don't wonder that 'somebody' was shocked."

There was a comical twinkle in his eye that showed him amused, and also showed that he did not attach the same importance to the little scene in the wood that she did. Poor Delia's heart began to sink. If a man in her own class of life had told her that he loved her he would also have meant that he wished to marry her as soon as he could or she was willing, but it seemed as if her mother was right in saying that gentlemen thought differently about such things.

Seeing the pain in her face—the dumb re-

proach—Captain Vavasour put his arm round her again, and drawing her to him said, soothingly,—

"Don't you know, Delia, that people always gossip. You are the prettiest girl hereabouts, and the other girls are all jealous of you, that's the long and the short of it; but I wouldn't spoil my pretty eyes for them, for after all we did no harm."

"I oughtn't to have been there with you. I am afraid," hesitatingly.

"My dear Delia, if you are always going to be afraid what pleasure will you get out of your life?" inquired Captain Vavasour, with the specious sophistry of a man of the world. "I always take the good things the gods are pleased to send me without troubling about consequences, and that is the secret of happiness, I believe. You and I like each other, don't we?" stooping to kiss the sweet lips, "and a fig for the rest."

"That's all very well for you," it struck Delia to say, "but I couldn't live like that."

"Because you have yet to learn philosophy, my pretty little Delia."

"I don't want to learn philosophy. I want to be happy," she said, with an earnestness that touched him, for though he had only been amusing himself he cared for Delia, perhaps, more than he knew, although not enough certainly to tempt him into the supreme folly of marrying her.

His one chance of retrieving his shattered fortunes was in bartering his old name for *parvenue* gold, and he could not afford to be disinterested.

Delia was simply delicious, and if only she had been a "Lady Adeline" or an "honourable Miss Something," he would have said how refined-looking she was; but she was only a farmer's daughter, poor child, and though he liked her more, perhaps, than he had ever liked any woman he could not marry her.

Only in that case he had no right to make love to her, of course. But then Captain Vavasour had never denied himself any pleasure, as he said himself, from the fear of consequences, and therefore it was hardly to be expected he would begin now. Then, to do him justice, he never suspected Delia of any strength of feeling, and fancied she would forget him as soon as he was gone.

"So you shall be happy," he said, smiling. "But what was it you brought me?" and he suddenly withdrew his arm, and walked to the table, where Delia had put down her tray. "A telegram!"

"The telegraph boy brought it."

But Captain Vavasour hardly heard her, he was tearing open the envelope in violent haste. Delia saw him flush darkly as he read; then he suddenly sat down, panting, on the nearest seat, and she flew to his side.

"You have bad news," she said, anxiously. "I am sure you have."

He pulled himself together, so to speak, before he answered her gravely,—

"My brother has been thrown from his horse and killed, Delia, and I am his heir."

"But he was kind to you, and you are sorry, I see," said Delia, sympathetically. "It was so sudden and shocking."

"Very sudden and shocking," he repeated, but his thoughts seemed far away. "Will you go and tell your mother, Delia, that I must start at once."

"There's no train until two," she answered, with a strong effort at self-control. "That is to say, if you are going to London."

"I must go there first; but are you sure?"

"Quite; but I can get you a time table if you like."

"No, no, never mind," he responded, with a certain impatience. "Two o'clock will do, and then I can have a chop before I start, and pack my things comfortably. I shall get to Ramsgate to night, in any case. I ought to have telegraphed back at once, but that will do when I get to the station."

Then suddenly he became conscious of Delia's pale looks, and added, with an accent of real tenderness,—



"My dear Delia, you mustn't be troubled. I shall be coming back to you again. You know I love you, and is not that enough?"

Delia listened greedily to these words, which seemed to print themselves on her heart, burning themselves in; and as she listened a smile broke over her face, and a rosy flush stained even her throat.

"If you promise me that I am satisfied," she said; and she departed without another word to give her orders to Mrs. Ambrose.

Her mother did not conceal her satisfaction when she heard that her lodger was going. It saved so much trouble and annoyance to have him leave of his own accord; and now there was no need to send Delia away. The girl would soon recover from her infatuation, and things return to their former condition; whilst she would have learnt this lesson—never to take in a handsome young lodger who belonged to a world so much above their own.

But then it is no use shutting the stable door after the steed has flown.

Captain Vavasour ate two chops, drank half a bottle of sherry, and by this time the dog-cart was at the door, and it was time for him to start.

Poor Delia, pale and sorrowful, came to bid him good-bye; and as he kissed her he took a locket off his chain and put it into her hand, saying softly,—

"Wear this always for my sake, Delia; and mind, you are not to grieve for me, for I shall soon be coming again."

And with this he kissed her once more lingeringly, and seizing hold of his valise went out into the hall. He shook hands with Mrs. Ambrose, thanking her for her attention, made the little maid happy with a "golden sovereign," and then jumped up into the dog-cart and drove away. Just as he was turning the corner he looked back to see Delia standing in the porch, framed round by roses and clematis, and her beauty struck him with a sort of pang. But the next moment he had waived her a kiss, and then he tried to think of other things, although the wistful look in Delia's blue eyes haunted him for many an hour.

### CHAPTER III.

A MONTH passed, and when no word or sign came from Captain Vavasour Delia began to droop. She declared always she was quite well when her mother questioned her, but her soft wild-rose bloom was gone, and her eyes looked heavy—as if they had wept more than slept.

Mrs. Ambrose began to get alarmed at last, and sent her away to London, asking Mrs. Lane to take her to a good doctor there, and make him tell her if anything was wrong.

His verdict reassured Mrs. Ambrose. There was no disease of any kind, he declared, but the girl was a little weak, and he should recommend good country air, and to be outdoors all day. So Delia was sent for home, and Marah went with her, and tried hard to cheer her up.

She had heard from Delia herself the story of her trouble, and resolved to cure her, if it were possible. But she did not know what a hard task she had undertaken. Delia listened silently to all her arguments, and almost seemed to agree with her that a man who had behaved as Captain Vavasour had behaved was not worthy of any woman's love; but the next minute she would say passionately,—

"I don't care whether he is worthy or unworthy; I love him just the same, and if he doesn't come I shall die."

"Delia—darling, don't speak in that horrible way," pleaded Marah. "We can't spare you, mother and I."

"Not when you know I shall be so glad to go!"

"You can't want to leave us, Delia."

"I am only a poor little foolish thing, and you won't miss me long," she said, "and I am so dreadfully tired, Marah. Sometimes I feel as if I were fast dying of weariness, but I know all the while that if he were to come I should want to live directly."

There was no reasoning down such a terrible infatuation as this, and Marah said one day to Mrs. Ambrose when they were alone,—

"Can we do nothing for Delia, mother? Supposing I were to write to Captain Vavasour?"

"I have thought of that, too," was the reply; "but one is loth to humiliate the poor child, and if he really cared for her he would have come back as soon as he had settled his affairs, and asked her to be his wife. I felt sure he was trifling with her from the very first."

"But you see, mother, we can't afford to think of our pride. Delia is dying!"

"Delia is dying!" repeated her mother, with a horror that showed she had been blinding her eyes to the truth. "Why, the doctor in London said there was nothing the matter with her but weakness."

"But that was four months ago, and she has been growing worse ever since. If nothing is done she won't be here at Christmas."

Mrs. Ambrose flung up her arms in despair. Delia had always been her favourite child, because she had been with her so much more than Marah; and, moreover, needed her more than her active capable sister, and at the thought of losing her she cried out in her despair,—

"It is that man who has killed her—curse him! Oh, Marah, can't we punish him? I would tear his cruel heart out of his body if I could. She was so innocently happy before she ever saw him, and now what is she, poor heart!"

"A mere wreck," returned Marah, with sombre fury. "Oh, mother, we will punish him somehow, unless he comes. But perhaps he never dreams that Delia cared for him so much, and would make atonement if he could. Let us give him a chance before we condemn him, and then if he fails us, we betide him, that is all."

Marah's eyes gleamed, her crimson lips closed with a snap. She looked for the moment like some beautiful tigress ready to spring on her prey.

Mrs. Ambrose glanced at her admiringly, as she answered,—

"Ay, we betide him! But do you know where to write, Marah?"

"Delia gave me the name of his club, and all gentlemen have their letters forwarded."

"Then write at once," exclaimed Mrs. Ambrose, with feverish impatience. "We can't let the child perish before our eyes."

"Of course we can't," replied Marah, only too glad to obtain her mother's consent. "I will write at once, and take the letter to the post myself, to make sure it goes—only Delia mustn't know."

But it almost seemed as if Delia guessed what they were about, or had overheard their conversation, for she began to ask eagerly when the post came in if there were any letters, and would sigh painfully when they told her not.

For a week—a fortnight passed, and there came no reply, and when the letter came back to them through the dead letter office Mrs. Ambrose began to feel that Delia was doomed.

They had written to Mrs. Lane in the meantime to ask her to make inquiries about Captain Vavasour; but she had been unable to obtain any information; and now, the last hope gone, they had only to smooth poor Delia's road to the tomb.

Their one comfort was that she looked upon death as a happy release, and kept on repeating,—

"I am so glad to go; if you know how glad you would never want to keep me a single hour."

"One day, when the end was very near, she said to Marah,—

"I want you to bury me just close to the big holly bush in the churchyard, because he said once he hoped to lay there if he died at Dithorpe, and Marah,—"

"Yes, my darling."

"You mustn't think I have been altogether foolish, for he did say that day he left, 'You mustn't be troubled. I shall be coming back to you again. You know I love you, and is not that enough?'"

"The more scoundrel he!" flashed Marah, indignantly.

"He meant to come back then, I have no doubt," Delia hastened to add; "but his friends persuaded him not, or he thought I didn't really care for him very much. As we don't know his motives we oughtn't to judge him."

"I don't want to know his motives, I judge him by his actions," replied Marah, who would have done everything else for Delia but speak well of Captain Vavasour. "If he knew he couldn't marry you he had no right to try and make you love him."

"No, but I am glad he did, anyhow, for I had a whole fortnight of happiness, Marah, and that was better than nothing at all."

"But your fortnight's happiness cost you very dear."

"Not too dear. I was just like some foolish creature I read of once who fell in love with the sun, and wanted the sun to come and see her. Of course his kisses burnt her all up, but I dare say she died happy, like me, for there is some happiness which is much too beautiful to last."

"If you can forgive him, Delia, I cannot. He has made a demon of me—for, whereas I was an innocent girl a few months ago now I feel sometimes as if I could murder the wretch who has killed my darling."

"Try not to feel like that," she pleaded. "I don't mind, Marah."

"Because you are an angel. If I had been wronged as you have do you suppose I should have been satisfied to die unavenged?"

"I hope so, Marah—"

"And I hope not," answered her sister, almost fiercely.

A thin little hand stole into hers, and Delia looked at her beseechingly out of her hollow, dim eyes.

"If you were as near the Unseen Land as I am, Marah, you wouldn't mind all these things. And then, supposing he had married me, and been disappointed and ashamed when he had to introduce me to the world, shouldn't I have suffered far more than I suffer now? Indeed it is best as it is, dear. I don't fancy I should have lived to make old bones in any case, and I am just tired out, you see. You'll stay with mother, and be a comfort to her, so that she won't miss me after a bit, and it will be so quiet there under the holly bush—no more sorrow, no more suffering."

"My darling, what did you ever know of sorrow and suffering until he came?"

"No; but then I had never known any great happiness either," responded Delia, loyal to the last. "People must pay for their pleasures."

"But not such a heavy price as you have paid."

"One can't choose, as a rule; but I have had my wish, at any rate, for I always prayed I might die rather than have to live without him."

"And now, darling, you mustn't talk any more," Marah said, seeing how white she looked. "Won't you try to sleep a little?"

"Yes, I'll try," answered Delia, with the sweet submissiveness that made her dearer than ever to her mother and Marah; and she closed her eyes and kept quite still.

But in an hour's time she opened them again, and said gently,—

"Mayn't I talk again now, Marah? You see I can't sleep, and I seem to have so much to say. Look here"—and she opened her night-dress to show Marah a gold locket suspended round her neck by a narrow cord, just long enough to reach to her heart. "I want this buried with me."

Marah began to sob, she could not help herself.

Delia's wasted hand sought her carelessly; but she showed no sign of emotion herself, unless it might be by the nervous pressure of her thin fingers.

"You promise, Marah?"

"Yes, dear, I promise."

"He gave it to me—the day he left."

"Yes, I know—"

Delia's hand was over her mouth now.

"You were going to add—'Curse him!'" Marah, I saw it in your eyes—but you know how it pains me to have you blame him, and perhaps, after all, it was only I who was wrong. Not knowing gentlemen's ways I might have taken

things that a lady in his own class would have laughed over too seriously."

"When a man tells a woman he loves her it means the same thing in every class, unless he happens to be a scoundrel—and I fancy, for all their boasting about their good blood, there are more gentlemen scoundrels than common scoundrels after all. I don't know a single farmer who would have treated you as Captain Vavasour has done—tried to win your love, and then left you to die."

"Perhaps he didn't try, Marah."

"You are always making excuses for him out of the goodness of your heart, dear; but I expect he will be judged up in Heaven if he is let off on earth—and he shouldn't wait so long for his punishment if my power only equalled my will."

"Oh! Marah," she murmured reproachfully.

"I should think it if I didn't say it dear, but I ought not to pain you, I know. Forgive me, Delia," and she kissed her tenderly. "You know I must always speak my mind."

"There was a long pause, and then Delia said,—

"Where is mother?"

"She is getting ready for church, dear. I thought you could spare her."

"Quite well—poor mother!"

And Delia sighed.

"How sweet the bells sound," she added, presently.

"I wonder if they have bells in Heaven, Marah."

"They have beautiful music, we know."

"Yes, and I fancy I can hear it sometimes when I am lying here half asleep, as if the angels were singing to me."

She looked out of the window, dreamily, to the blue arch of sky overhead, and then she added,—

"I am glad I am not dying in the summer when the flowers are out, and everything is so beautiful, although I know it will be far lovelier up there, of course. Still I did love the flowers so, and that day in the wood when he told me he loved me he gathered a great bunch of wild roses to put in my hair and dress. He always said I reminded him of a wild rose, because of my soft, pink colour. And I am so white, Marah."

"All through him."

Delia did not notice this speech. Her eyes were still fixed on the sky, whilst her thoughts were far away.

Lying thus the heavy eyes presently closed, and Delia slept—Marah still holding her hand, and scarcely breathing lest she should break her slumber.

When she roused presently her mind wandered a little, and Marah sent off in all haste for the village doctor.

"I can do nothing," he said, when he saw her. "The end is very near."

"What do you mean by near?" asked Marah, forcing herself to speak calmly, though her heart was ready to break.

"I don't think she will see another day."

"Impossible!" cried Marah, despairingly.

"Can nothing be done, Dr. Dale?"

He shook his head decidedly.

"Your sister's case has been hopeless from the first, simply because she would not try to live. At starting there was nothing radically wrong, and it seemed as if tonics could have cured her in no time, but nothing I could give her had the smallest effect for the reason I have just told you. A patient must help us or we can do very little."

"Then she has just been murdered!" cried Marah, fiercely.

Dr. Dale turned and stared at her.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"Not by you. I didn't mean that. I know you have done all you could, Dr. Dale, but the person who robbed her of all desire to live was her murderer."

Dr. Dale had heard in the village how Captain Vavasour had courted Delia Ambrose, and his sudden departure had caused a good deal of gossip, which had also reached his ears. Therefore he thought he understood Marah's passionate accusation, and answered soothingly,—

"Yes, but I don't think your sister had a very strong constitution, Miss Ambrose."

"I know, but you said you could have cured her if she had wanted to live."

"So I could then, but there might have been something else later. Of course, if she had had much stamina mental trouble couldn't have killed her."

"I don't understand what you mean," exclaimed Marah, suddenly remembering that she must defend the poor girl's secret. "Delia was one of the most fortunate girls I knew!"

"No doubt," he answered gravely. "I wish I could help you, Miss Ambrose, but as I can't, and Pratt's wife is very ill, and wants me, I will go to her if you will let me."

"Tell me first of all if there is anything we can do to make her death easier, Dr. Dale!"

"You need not be anxious about that; she is dying of weakness, and will go off like one falling asleep. Only keep with her, for the end may come at any moment now."

"Thank you," Marah said. "I always prefer to know the truth."

And she conducted Dr. Dale to the door, and then went back to Delia. Half-an-hour later Mrs. Ambrose returned from church, and had scarcely need to be told what had gone on in her absence, for there was a grey shadow on Delia's face which comes only once, and she had hardly strength to smile.

However, she rallied a little towards evening, and lay watching the fire wistfully as it flared and danced in the wide, old-fashioned grate. Once she said,—

"The earth is a pleasant place for those who are happy, mother— isn't it? I used to think once upon a time it was nice to be alive, but now I would rather get away, and be at peace."

They did not contradict her—she was too far gone—and since nothing could save her it was well she should be satisfied with her lot. Only it seemed a pity she should be so necessary to their happiness if she herself were longing for release like a captive bird.

When midnight struck the two watchers noted that her face had grown more shadowy still, but she lingered on until early morning, and then, when the day was at its darkest and coldest, she awoke out of a sort of a doze, and said, faintly,—

"Are you there, mother—Marah?"

They both bent forward that she might see them better.

"Good-bye, dears," she said; "don't grieve—I am so glad to go."

There came a long pause, and they thought she was already gone, when she opened her eyes again full upon Marah, and said,—

"You will forgive him, dear—I am sure he didn't understand."

Even at such a moment Marah could not lie and promise what was required of her.

Fortunately Delia could not wait, and having just lifted herself to smile at them both she fell back upon her pillow dead.

Mrs. Ambrose, who hardly realised her loss as yet, closed the sweet eyes with a reverent hand, whilst Marah stood up, and said, with sombre passion,—

"We know whose work this is, mother, don't we? And, so help me Heaven, if the opportunity ever comes, I will punish that man until I make him taste some of the bitterness he has brought upon us. That poor creature would have been alive now, and her own happy self, if she had never seen Captain Vavasour."

"Ah! if—there are so many 'ifs' in life, Marah. We've got to bear our sorrow, my dear, and there's no use in blaming others for what can't be helped."

"It could have been helped."

"In the beginning—but that is past and done with now, and the thing that becomes us is resignation."

"And revenge," muttered Marah, between her white teeth.

Mrs. Ambrose did not hear—she was smoothing Delia's shapely young limbs for burial—and her tears were falling fast upon the unconscious face, which looked pinched and drawn just now, but would soon soften into white loveliness and angelic grace. Marah was too overcome to aid

her, but when it was quite light she went into the garden, and gathered some snowdrops and winter roses, and made a diadem of them for the young head. She, indeed, was growing chill by this time, for it laid against her heart, and the lips were beginning to smile again, and it was possible to realize Delia as an angel in heaven.

By the next Sunday Delia lay in her quiet grave under the holly tree, and Mrs. Ambrose and Marah were preparing for departure. The former had let her farm, feeling as if she could not remain at Dibthorp alone, and Mrs. Lane's failing health made it impossible that Marah should leave her altogether. Therefore it seemed a good plan for Mrs. Ambrose, who had a sufficient income, to join Mrs. Lane in housekeeping, and as soon as everything was settled Marah carried her mother away with her.

Be sure their last visit in Dibthorp was to the churchyard where poor Delia, "after life's fitful fever, slept well."

A month after their departure a gentleman drove into Dibthorp, and put up at the village inn, where he was promptly recognized as Mrs. Ambrose's summer lodger. He looked remarkably well and cheerful, and after ordering luncheon to be ready for him in an hour strolled off towards the Court Lodge with an expression of pleased anticipation on his face.

He had kept away six months to cure Delia of any foolish fancy she might have had, and now he had come to redeem his promise, bringing with him such gifts as please a woman's eye—silk dresses and jewellery—with which he was to buy forgiveness if he had done any wrong.

But he could not believe he had, for surely he had said no more to her than he had said to heaps of women who had but laughed in his face. It was true he had kissed Delia, but then this was a liberty you might venture to take with a farmer's daughter without its meaning anything, and really the child was so pretty she tempted you beyond your strength.

These thoughts were in the young man's mind as he strolled in a leisurely way towards the farmhouse, noting with a smile the banks of the river where he had passed many summer afternoons, and the old wood where he had once strolled with pretty Delia.

"She was a sweet little thing," he said to himself, musingly, "and it is just possible I might have regretted it much if I had married her, although the idea never entered into my head, but, as a rule, such marriages are a terrible folly, for it stands to reason the girl can't know how to behave in a world of which she has no experience. They talk about fine instincts, and Delia was, no doubt, very refined for her class; but the cloven foot would have peeped out of course, if one had been very intimate with her. I dare say she is engaged to some sturdy young farmer by this time, and will make him a most excellent wife."

He finished his reverie in the porch of the Court Lodge, where Delia had stood to wave him a last farewell, and thought of this as he reached for the bell, and rang it lustily. A maid-servant appeared—but not the little maid to whom he had given a sovereign at parting, and in answer to his question said that Mrs. Ambrose was gone.

"Gone!" repeated the young man in a tone of surprise. "Where?"

"To London town, sir, I believe; but mistress could give you the address, I am sure, if you wanted it."

"No, thank you—I should have liked to see her and Miss Delia Ambrose if they had been here, but as they have left it is of no consequence. I suppose they will be coming back again one of these days?"

"I don't think so, sir. Master has taken the farm. Mrs. Ambrose can't bear herself at Dibthorp ever since Miss Delia's death—"

The other started as if he had been shot.

"Delia's death—you can't mean that Mrs. Ambrose's second daughter is dead!"

"Indeed, sir, she is, this two months or more. If you'd come through the churchyard you'd have seen her grave just under the holly tree."

He reeled for a minute like a drunken man,



and it was in quite a broken voice he managed at last to say,—

"What did she die of, do you know?"

"Of nothing particular, sir—only weakness. The doctor said she wouldn't try to live."

"Had she had any trouble, then?"

"I've heard say she was in love with a gentleman who lodged with Mrs. Ambrose once, and he deceived her," answered the girl, unconscious of the pain she was giving. "At any rate she was never herself after he went away, and kept fading very gradual until she died."

The young man slipped half-a-crown into her hand, and then hurried away to the churchyard, and stood by Delia's grave, with hot tears gathering in his dark eyes.

"It can't be true that she died through me," he kept saying to himself; and yet his heart was very heavy as he recalled many words she had spoken, all showing the warmth and tenderness of her feelings. "Only how could I have supposed she would remember me after I was gone? Women never do."

He felt it hard he should have happened on one who was different to the rest; but he was deeply touched, too, by poor Delia's fidelity.

He even knew why she had asked to lie under the holly tree, and he felt like a monster as he went slowly back to the inn, paid for the luncheon he could not eat, and then returned to town a wiser and sadder man for his visit to Dithorpe.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT a lovely woman! do you know who she is?" inquired Lord Ramsden, turning to a young man at his side, who was a fashionable dandy, and always boasted that he knew every *débutante* as soon as she came out.

They were idling an hour away in Rotten-row, watching the *équestriennes* as they cantered past, and commenting freely on their looks and riding, when the lady in question—a splendid brunette—drew up close beside them, and looked at them both with calmly critical eyes.

"Don't know, I'm sure—never saw her before," returned the Honourable Percy; "a doctored handsome woman, though!"

"And looks as thoroughbred as her horse," pursued Lord Ramsden. "I must find out where she 'hails from,' or I shan't sleep to-night."

"I daresay she's an American," said the Honourable Percy, feeling that this was an easy way of accounting for the mysterious stranger. "There's a shipload of them always coming over."

"And why not?" inquired Lord Ramsden, laughing, for he spoke in quite an aggrieved tone.

"If you had four unmarried sisters you wouldn't ask that question. The Americans carry off such a lot of prizes in the matrimonial market they leave nothing much for our girls."

"Pshaw! my dear fellow, our girls get married too. Don't be so desponding."

"It's enough to make one," drawled Percy, "for I'm always on duty, and I'm coming to the age now when a man likes a quiet dinner at his club, and a rubber afterwards a doctored deal better than balls."

"Come, you are only eight-and-twenty."

"In actual years; but you see I have lived so fast I am forty in feeling."

"Nonsense."

"Pon my word, but how that girl stares at you, Ramsden. She can't have fallen in love with you at first sight; for I suppose the dear creatures fall in love sometimes as well as us."

"I don't know. But I can't say that the expression of her eyes suggested such an agreeable thought as that. If I had ever seen her before I should say she had some spite against me."

"Perhaps she thinks we were staring at her rudely."

"Were we, then?"

"No; a cat may look at a king—and she must be accustomed to any amount of admiration."

The handsome *équestrienne*, who seemed to have paused merely to look at Lord Ramsden, as it appeared, gave her horse its head now and

galloped off, with a flush on her face that added to her beauty, and made everyone turn to wonder whom she could be.

Lord Ramsden watched her until she was out of sight, and then somehow he sighed a little as he added,—

"Do try and find out something about her, Percy; one ought to know, I am sure."

"Very well," the Honourable Percy replied; and then he nodded to Lord Ramsden and went off to speak to a lady in one of the chairs, and the young earl was alone.

He lingered for half-an-hour hoping the fair rider would return, and he should have another glimpse of her face, but at the end of this time he began to understand that she had left the Row, and sauntered off in search of his carriage.

That evening, as he was dining quietly alone, a whist-party on the *tapis* for later, the Honourable Percy broke in upon him like a whirlwind.

"Eureka—Eureka!" he cried, and dropped into a chair, panting. "I have just found out all about your fair friend."

"Have you dined, Percy?"

"No, I haven't had time yet."

"Well, then, draw your chair up to the table; they shall bring back the soup, and whilst you are eating you shall tell me all about my fair friend, as you are pleased to call her."

The Honourable Percy devoted himself to his dinner for a few minutes, drank two glasses of sherry, and then, much refreshed and cheered, he began his story,—

"Well, you know, after I left you this morning I inquired right and left of people if they knew who she was, and those who had noticed her at all seemed sure she was a stranger."

"But half-an-hour ago I happened on old Colonel Bagthorpe, and directly I began to describe her, he said at once,—

"I know quite well who you mean, she's a Miss St. Maur, and tremendously rich. They say she has a million; but that won't quite go down. However, there's no doubt she has £300,000 at the least, and that's enough for any reasonable woman."

"Only she oughtn't to be handsome, too," I said, "it isn't fair, for I was thinking of the poor girls, you see."

"I suppose she oughtn't," he said; "but I daresay she doesn't object to the combination. You know who has taken her up, I suppose?"

"Haven't the least idea."

"The old Duchess of Westminster. She is to present her next Tuesday, and will catch her for the Marquis if she can, of course; but you can see the girl isn't a fool, by her face, and I don't expect she will allow herself to be caught for an idiot like poor Ashford."

"There," concluded the Honourable Percy; "you know as much as the Colonel knows now, and if you want to make Miss St. Maur's acquaintance you will have to cultivate the duchess's."

"It would be a trying ordeal, for she is an odious old woman, but I daresay I should make up my mind even to that if I were a marrying man."

"What makes you think I am a marrying man?"

"Because it's your duty to be. You have a good old title, two unencumbered estates, and, of course, you must have an heir."

"I suppose I must one of these days," replied Lord Ramsden, philosophically. "But I like my present life too well to hurry."

"There I think you are wrong, because it's the sort of thing that ought to be done in good time if it is done at all. A fellow gets into set bachelor ways later, and then he isn't likely to be happy."

"Are you sure he ever is happy under any circumstances?" asked Lord Ramsden, cynically.

"One sees marriages sometimes that turn out well."

"Does one! I am glad to hear you say so, as such a fate is hanging over me. But I am afraid I have lost my illusions as far as women are concerned. I knew a pretty little girl once, a farmer's daughter, who was as pure and tender

and sweet as the ideal wife one has dreamt of," continued Lord Ramsden, a shadow coming into his eyes; "but that was only one."

"I suppose she was one of the flowers that are born to blush unseen," answered the Honourable Percy, lightly. "But why didn't you marry her?"

"She wasn't in my own station of life. She was the daughter of a woman I lodged with when Firefly let me in for £10,000 worth of damages by losing the Derby, and my brother paid the debt for me on condition that I sold off my horses and kept quiet. She was singularly refined for her class, but it wouldn't have done—"

"And so you tore yourself away!"

"My poor brother died just then, you know, and I came into everything."

"Which made such a marriage still more inexpedient."

"Perhaps—but I don't know what made me talk about it, for it was a sorrowful story, and I am afraid I was not altogether blameless. I had been in the habit of flirting with every pretty woman I came across, and it never occurred to me she would take it more seriously than the rest. I forgot that she was so simple and innocent, poor child! A spade meant a spade to her."

He paused here, evidently moved; and the Honourable Percy, who was a good-hearted fellow, in spite of his affectations, pretended to be engrossed in a *pâté*. But presently he said, without looking off his plate,— "What was the end of your little romance?"

"The poor girl died," answered Lord Ramsden, shortly.

"Is it possible to die of love?"

"Not for triflers like us; but I can understand that trouble might weaken a naturally delicate girl."

"Weaken, yes, but not kill."

"In this case she died, and I hope and pray you may be right—that I had nothing to do with it, but sometimes I feel so badly about it that, upon my word, if I could hear she had come to life again I would marry her straight off."

Of course this was a safe promise, as Delia slept soundly enough in Dithorpe churchyard, but he was quite sincere; for the poor girl's sad fate had been a great weight on his mind, and often in the dead of the night he would rouse suddenly to hear these whispered words,—

"You killed me. But for you I should have been alive now, and happy."

He could not tell what had made him think so much of Delia this day, but somehow she seemed to be present with him even when he was speculating about Miss St. Maur, who, as a fashionable beauty and a great heiress, could bear no sort of affinity with the simple village belle. But there is no accounting for such impressions, and though Lord Ramsden drank far more than his wont that night to drown care, he could not even dim the vividness of the tender, beseeching face, nor forget for an instant that she was dead through him.

#### CHAPTER V.

For more than a week Lord Ramsden tried vainly to obtain an introduction to Miss St. Maur. He even introduced himself to the Duchess of Westminster as a friend of her son, whom he certainly had met a few times, and sincerely despised; but though she was very civil she did not invite him to come and see her, or introduce him to Miss St. Maur.

At the Drawing Room he caught a glimpse of the new beauty, whom royalty had been pleased to approve, thus establishing beyond controversy her right to the title, and she was present at the State Concert afterwards, under the old duchess's wing, but he could not see that anyone spoke to her, and he heard the former tell the lady by whom she sat that she expected dear Ashford home in a few days, whereupon the other responded in a significant tone, "I suppose you do."

Lord Ramsden had given up going to balls

since his brother's death, but he began to accept all the invitations he received now, in hopes of meeting Miss St. Maur. But it seemed as if she were not fond of these gaities, for though he saw her sometimes at the opera, and heard of her at quiet soirées, he never met her at a single ball.

He would have gone on like this for weeks, perhaps, she evading him like a will-o'-the-wisp, only that fortune favoured him in a wonderful way. She was riding one morning early in the Row before there were many people there, when a tall powerful chestnut horse which was being exercised by a groom suddenly took fright, and came down upon Miss St. Maur like a whirlwind.

Her own horse was unusually fresh and naturally high-spirited, and when it heard the thud of the other's hoofs, and its panting breath, it became almost mad with excitement. Miss St. Maur patted and soothed it, and did her best to keep it under control; but Lord Ramden knew how the contest must end unless he could get to the animal's head, and was hurrying to the rescue when the animal suddenly reared high up into the air, and Miss St. Maur slipped off and lay in a heap on the ground.

Fortunately she fell clear of the horse's hoofs, and he did not touch her as he scampered wildly off—but as she might have been hurt in another way he felt his heart sink as he sprang out of the saddle, giving the rein to his groom, and knelt down by her side.

He saw at once that she was alive, although she lay so still; and in about a minute the brief faintness passed off, and she opened her glorious dark eyes full upon him as he leant against his arm. To his surprise a strange expression of anger passed over her face, and she shuddered herself upright, as she said,—

"Thank you, I am quite well now. Where is my horse?"

"It has followed the other, I fancy; but you need not be anxious; it will be caught, no doubt, before it does any harm."

"I hope so," she said, making an effort to rise; but she was shaken and alarmed, if not hurt, and had to accept his aid in spite of herself.

"I had better fetch you a cab," he observed. "If you would not mind getting over the fence you could sit down on the seat opposite whilst I go—and there would not be far for you to walk."

"Thank you—I will try," she answered, and began to walk, but stopped presently with a look of pain in her eyes, and paling cheeks. "I am afraid my foot is a little sprained or something; it hurts me when I move," she added, reluctantly; "I shall never be able get as far as the fence."

There was a dilemma. As far as Lord Ramden was concerned he wished nothing better than to prolong the interview, but he was too honourable to care to compromise her, and such stories make a great sensation in society. By noon the next day it would be all over fashionable London that Miss St. Maur had fallen off her horse, and been assisted by Lord Ramden, who had carried her home in his arms, &c., &c.

A story never loses in the telling, of course; and Miss St. Maur was so much the subject of curiosity and interest at the moment any details concerning her would have been greedily welcomed. He looked about him for some way out of the difficulty; and, as if in answer to his appeal, he perceived his groom coming towards them, leading Miss St. Maur's horse which, quite blown by its little escapade, hung its head and looked thoroughly subdued.

Miss St. Maur caught sight of it at the same time and heaved a sigh of relief.

"It will be all right now," she said, "if you can only find my servant. I can't think what has become of him. He must have followed somebody else."

"My groom shall go home with you," Lord Ramden promised, wishing he had dared usurp this privilege himself. "But what about your foot?"

"It is not the stirrup-foot, and I am not very far from home."

But though she spoke cheerfully she had great difficulty in mounting her horse, and he had to almost lift her into the saddle. Then she thanked him, but without offering her hand, and rode slowly off towards the Duchess of Warminster's house in Park-lane, followed, although she was unconscious of the fact, by Lord Ramden as well as his groom.

That very evening he received a little note from Miss St. Maur, thanking him for his "kindness," and begging he would not mention her little adventure.

"The Duchess has been so shocked I feel like a criminal," she added; "and yet I don't really see how I could help my horse behaving so badly. I told her some gentlemen came to my assistance, but I did not mention your name, so pray don't enlighten her."

Of course her wishes were law, and Lord Ramden kept his own counsel; but he was rather amused when Percy Lescelles cried out to him when they met at the club—

"Did you hear what happened to the St. Maur, yesterday? She was thrown from her horse, and some low fellow picked her up, and saw her home."

"Are you sure it was some 'low fellow'?" inquired Lord Ramden, smiling.

"So they say. But Miss St. Maur didn't know his name. The old duchess is furious."

"Why?"

"Because Ashford ought to have been there, she says."

"Has he come home, then?"

"I saw him this morning, and he told me he arrived late last night."

"Ah! too late to be of any use. But did you hear if Miss St. Maur was better? I understand she sprained her ankle when she fell."

"Ashford said she had hurt herself a little, and kept to her room."

"Then he hasn't seen her yet?"

"I believe not."

"Isn't he rather curious?"

"No; he said he hated beauties—they always snubbed a fellow so."

"It is a good thing he is prepared for his fate; for I shall be very much surprised if Miss St. Maur tolerates him."

"You forget that he is heir to a dukedom."

"Indeed I do not; but she doesn't strike me as the sort of girl to sell herself for a title."

"You can never tell. Disinterestedness is not the virtue of the age."

"No; but hang it all, Percy, there are some women left worth believing in."

"I suppose there are, and Miss St. Maur may be one of them; but I don't know enough of her to be able to judge. Still I should think she could afford to be better than most."

"I don't see what she would gain by being Marchioness of Ashford if she were saddled with a fool of a husband."

"That is from your point of view. But, you see, although women always accuse us of running after money, we are not a bit more mercenary than they are; for they would sell their souls for jewels and fine clothes."

"But Miss St. Maur can have as many of them as she likes, and yet you see she dresses more simply than any woman in London."

"She is always in black."

"Yes, and that gives her a certain distinction amongst all the dressed-up people one sees. But look here, Percy, will you come with me one day? I am going to storm the ducal citadel."

"I'm game," answered the other, gaily. "But let us wait until Miss St. Maur is well again."

"Of course. You didn't suppose I wanted to see the Duchess, did you?"

"You'd be the only man who ever did, if so."

"I suppose the Duke did, once upon a time?"

"Not he. It's a well-known fact that the Duke proposed when he wasn't sober, and they kept him to it when he was, poor man; I thought you had heard that story."

"I daresay I have; but the Duchess never

interested me until she became Miss St. Maur's guardian."

"And now you are prepared to love her dearly if she will only invite you to Darham House."

However, the Duchess knew what she was about, and for a time nothing but old fogies, or married men, partook of her gracious hospitality. People laughed and wondered if Miss St. Maur would allow herself to be caught, and some prophesied that she would; but the young lady herself was inscrutable, and gave no sign of her intentions.

The Marquis of Ashford rode with her every day in the park, and seemed to be in constant attendance; but though it was evident he was very much in love, she did not appear to give him any encouragement, unless by accepting his escort, which, perhaps, she could not refuse.

Meanwhile Lord Ramden and the Honourable Percy went to storm the ducal citadel, as they had declared they would. The Duchess was out; but when they asked for Miss St. Maur the butler said, rather hesitatingly, that she was at home, but did not usually receive visitors in her Grace's absence.

"She will receive us, anyhow," said the Honourable Percy, with calm impertinence; and he made a sign to Lord Ramden, who immediately slipped a sovereign into the man's hand.

"Oh! of course; if you have an appointment, my lord, it is quite different," the butler added in the next breath. "Her Grace won't be home for another hour."

After this little hint he led the way upstairs to a charming boudoir, hung with blue satin and bright with flowers, where Miss St. Maur sat reading.

She was so absorbed in her book she did not hear their footsteps, and when the butler announced them she looked up with a vivid blush and said, gravely,—

"The servant forgot to tell you that the Duchess was out. I am afraid she won't be in for some time."

"So we understood, but took the liberty of coming up all the same to inquire if you had recovered from your accident."

The colour deepened still more on her face, and she looked scrutinizingly at Lord Ramden. But she regained her composure when the Honourable Percy added, with all his native influence,—

"Ramden and I have done nothing since but envy the fortunate individual who went to your assistance. You don't know his name, I suppose?"

She turned to him with an amused laugh.

"As I don't know what form your envy might take I think it would be better not to tell you."

"But if I promise not to quite kill him!"

There was a malicious gleam in the girl's handsome eyes.

"Perhaps I shouldn't mind."

"Then deliver him up to my vengeance," cried the young man, striking an attitude. "Where is he to be found?"

"Don't I look as if I were capable of avenging my own wrongs?" she asked. "In this case, of course, there is nothing to avenge, for the gentleman did me a great service—but if it had been otherwise—"

"You would have known what to do!"

"I fancy so."

"Do you know you begin to frighten me, Miss St. Maur? I am afraid you are strong-minded."

"And I am afraid I am not."

"You are pleased to be enigmatical."

"I don't see how. I am conscious of feeling weak sometimes when I want to be strong, and—passionately—I hate to believe that of myself."

"Why do you so particularly want to be strong-minded? You will never have to protect yourself."

"Am I not alone now?"

"Nay, you are under the voluminous wing of her Grace the Duchess of Warminster—and her dear boy—who, if his mother may be believed, is a perfect Bayard."



Miss St. Maur laughed merrily.

"Fancy poor Lord Ashford a Bayard! I believe he would be afraid of his own shadow. But we are talking scandal, are we not?"

And she turned the subject by asking Lord Ramsden's opinion of her ferns. She was a delightful companion, and the time passed so quickly in her company.

Lord Ramsden was surprised presently to find they had been there an hour, and began to apologise humbly.

"Oh! never mind," she answered, with a smile—"Her Grace will take care it never occurs again."

"Do you mean she doesn't allow you to see visitors?" exclaimed Lord Ramsden, indignantly.

"Not gentlemen."

"I think I would insist upon being my own mistress if I were you. You might as well be in a gunnery if the masculine element is to be so rigidly excluded."

"Not at all; there is the Duke."

"He is seventy years old, and as deaf as a post."

"But Lord Ashford is young!"

"And a fool!"

"Fortunately I am not so difficult to please as you are, for I like both of them."

"Especially Lord Ashford?" put in the Honourable Percy.

She stared at him haughtily for a moment, then her features relaxed, and she burst out laughing again.

"I really think you are the most impertinent person I know," she said.

"So everyone tells me," answered the young man, tranquilly. "But then nobody minds; it is only my way."

"I don't see why you should be such a privileged person."

"Nor I; unless it be that what you usurp is always accorded to you. That is why I am coming again to see you shortly."

"I tell you you won't be admitted."

"Will you leave that to me!"

She shook her head decidedly.

"Indeed, Mr. Lascelles, you mustn't come again, the Duchess wouldn't like it; and whilst I live under her roof I am bound to consult her wishes. I shall get a terrible lecture as it is."

"Then I should lecture her back again."

"You forget that she is old enough to be my mother!"

"Why don't you say your grandmother, Miss St. Maur?"

"Because that wouldn't be true. And now you really, really must go," she added, half persuasively, half imperiously. "If the Duchess were to come she would never believe I wasn't in the habit of receiving gentlemen."

"How long do you mean to keep in leading-stings?"

She was some little while before she answered, and then her reply came cool and curt.

"Until it suits me to make a change."

"Which I hope will be very soon," responded the Honourable Percy, in no way disconcerted by this rebuff. "Come along, Ramsden, we've got to go."

The earl rose reluctantly.

There was a charm in Miss St. Maur's presence which he could not account for or define. He had seen more beautiful women, perhaps, but never one who appealed both to his intellect and to his side.

And then it was so delightful to watch her; she had so much change of expression. One moment she looked as scornful as a queen, the next she shot a softened glance at him; but for some inexplicable reason she appeared to be prejudiced against him, he thought.

It was the first time he had seen a woman who pleased him in every respect, and it was a little hard that all of a sudden he should find it difficult to please her.

They met often after this, and there was always that mixture of disdain and softness in her that puzzled and piqued him so much, and made him feel sometimes as if he should like to kiss her feet, at others strangle her lest any other man should have what he was beginning to long for with all his strength.

And so things went on until the season was drawing to a close, and Lord Ramsden began to fear that the duchess would soon carry Miss St. Maur away to her castle up in the north, and he should be left mourning.

There was a large garden party coming off at one of the pleasantest houses of the "upper ten," and Lord Ramsden went—for the same reason that he went everywhere now—in hopes of meeting Miss St. Maur.

For an hour he watched for her arrival in vain, and then the gaily-dressed crowd, who had gathered under the trees, parted to make a way for the Duchess of Westminster, who advanced smiling with Miss St. Maur by her side.

The heiress was dressed in white, with a bunch of natural roses in her hat, and another at her bosom.

She carried a white lace sunshade in her hand, and an ivory fan, trimmed with snowy feathers.

Her eyes looked strangely intense and brilliant under her black brows, but her face was pale and her lips of a bright feverish red.

As soon as he dared Lord Ramsden made his way up to her, and bending over her chair whispered eagerly,—

"You don't look yourself to-day. What is the matter?"

"Nothing," she answered coldly, "except a slight headache. London is beginning to get so terribly oppressive."

"Doesn't the band make your head worse?"

"Perhaps it does. I ought to have stayed at home."

"Why, when I can find you a cool and quiet place if you like. I was strolling about the grounds before you came, and found a shady little arbour near a waterfall, where you would not even hear the music."

Miss St. Maur rose with an odd look of determination and triumph both on her face, and taking his arm strolled away with him, all London looking on and commenting on the fact.

The duchess rose in undignified haste, and caught her up just as she had reached the end of the lawn.

"My dear Adelaide, you mustn't go away like this—what will people say!"

Miss St. Maur turned to her, smiling,—

"You let me leave yesterday with Lord Ashford."

"Yes, but then he is quite different."

"Why?" she asked, with provoking coolness.

"Because he is my son, and people would know directly I had placed you under his care."

"They will think you have placed me under Lord Ramsden's care, and I must really get away from all the noise."

"Let us go home, then."

"I will just take a stroll in the shade first of all, and come back to you presently," replied Miss St. Maur, her lips taking an obstinate fold.

The Prince and Princess of Wales arrived at this minute, and the duchess had to depart; but seeing that her objections had no effect on Miss St. Maur she addressed herself to Lord Ramsden as he turned away, begging him to bring his companion back soon, and to be sure and not allow her to sit down on the grass.

"The duchess treats me as if I were a baby," exclaimed Miss St. Maur, as soon as her grace was out of hearing. "I begin to be rather tired of my bondage."

Lord Ramsden thrilled at this confession; but as he dared not speak just yet he controlled his feelings for the moment, and said, quietly,—

"What made you put yourself under the duchess's protection?"

"She is my nearest neighbour in Leamshire, and as soon as I took possession of my property there she came forward to welcome me. I thought her so kind and motherly then. I did not know she had a son for whom I was destined."

"You do not seem to be fascinated with the prospect."

"I have not the slightest intention of marrying Lord Ashford."

"I am thankful to hear you say that, for I have fancied sometimes—"

"That I wanted to be a duchess, I suppose, for you could not fancy I was in love with Lord Ashford."

"No, but you seemed kind to him."

"I daresay, for I don't really dislike the poor man. He isn't clever, of course, and Boreas one dreadfully; but he has a kind heart."

"So I have heard. But here we are at my arbour. What do you think of it, Miss St. Maur?"

"It looks rather dark."

"Because you are in the sunshine. When once your eyes get accustomed to the subdued light you will be able to see perfectly. Hasn't the drip, drip, of the fountain a cool sound?" he added, in a softer tone, as he took his seat beside her on the rustic bench; "and how sweet the roses smell. This is far nicer than the lawn."

She leant back silently, and her face was even paler than it had been before, whilst her eyes seemed literally to glow in the gloom. Lord Ramsden, who had meant to be so eloquent and persuasive, felt the words freeze on his lips, but he dared to lift her gloved hand and kiss it, and as she did not chide him his courage returned, and he murmured, passionately,—

"Since the first time I saw you I loved you, Miss St. Maur, and the feeling has been strengthening day by day, until I know now that I cannot live without you."

"I wonder how many women you have said the very same thing to in the course of your life, Lord Ramsden!"

"I have talked nonsense to plenty; but you are the first I have ever asked to marry me."

"More shame to you, perhaps; because when men say everything but that, it is very cruel."

"I know it is; and I have not much on my conscience in that respect, for the girls I always flirted with were amusing themselves as well I—"

He broke off here suddenly, for the magnificent eyes were fixed on him so intently he felt almost compelled to add,—

"Once, perhaps, I was to blame. I have reproached myself often; at any rate. But I did not mean any harm, and when one is accustomed to trifle it is not always easy to understand that others may take it seriously."

"Or that what is fun to you is death to them," said Miss St. Maur, coldly.

Lord Ramsden started, and looked at her keenly. It almost seemed from her manner as if she knew something of his miserable adventure at Dithorpe.

But this was absurd, of course. How should a fashionable heiress and beauty know about Delia Ambrose! He recovered himself with effort, and said,—

"We all make mistakes sometimes, and I don't pretend to be better than the rest; but I can promise you that if you will marry me you shall have no reason to regret your choice. I love you with all my heart, and I am tired of a bachelor life. I have £40,000 a year, which is a certain guarantee that I am not seeking your fortune—which is, I assure you, a drawback in my eyes."

She laughed incredulously.

"If I were poor and of humble birth you would not think of me, Lord Ramsden."

"If you were ever so poor or ever so humble, and I loved you as I love you now, I should marry you in spite of everything. I never dreamt that it was possible to care for anyone as I care for you."

She seemed to be convinced at last, for she held out her other hand to him, saying gently,—

"I daresay I am very foolish, but I am quite inclined to try you."

Beside himself with happiness he would have caught her up to him and pressed her to his heart, but Miss St. Maur drew away from him with a certain hauteur.

"No, please don't," she said, confusedly.

"When we know each other better. And now will you take me back to the duchess, Lord Ramsden?"

"Surely we may have ten minutes more together?"

"Not unless we want her to come and fetch me away. She is one of those strong-minded

people who won't stand any nonsense. There she is"—drawing a quick breath, and pointing out her grace's portly figure as she came sailing down the path, her voluminous skirts sweeping the gravel—"what shall we do?"

"Steal a march upon her," answered Lord Ramsden, laughing; and, drawing Miss St. Maur with him, he passed out of the opposite side of the arbour, and hurried her towards the lawn by another path, so that when the duchess returned in a great flutter ten minutes later Miss St. Maur was seated by Lord Ashford, looking very cool and innocent, and was quite distressed to see the duchess so anxious and overheated.

#### CHAPTER VI.

LORD RAMSDEN was considered a very lucky man when his engagement to Miss St. Maur was made public. But although he was most passionately attached to his beautiful fiancée he was not altogether satisfied, for her manner was so strange sometimes she almost frightened him.

One minute she would yield to his caresses, the next raise herself out of his arms, and accuse him bitterly of being a deceiver, and wanting her only for her money. But as the duchess had grown rather cold since she found that Miss St. Maur would never be her daughter-in-law it was desirable that the marriage should take place at once; and the girl saw this herself, and did not oppose her lover's prayer.

But one day, about a fortnight before their wedding, she wrote to him that she had left the duchess's, circumstances being altogether changed, but if he would go and see her that evening she would explain everything.

The address she gave—in a cheap suburb—was a surprise to him, but as there was no accounting for a woman's caprices he decided not to be anxious. But he could not help staring when he was introduced by a slovenly little maid of about fourteen into a small, meanly-furnished room, such as the lowest dependent in the grand house from which Miss St. Maur had come would have turned up her nose at in high disdain.

"Miss will be down in a minute," she said, and shut him in and retired, taking with her a plated spoon that was lying on the table, to save him from temptation, no doubt.

Presently Miss St. Maur appeared, dressed simply in black merino, but looking neat and refined, and more beautiful than ever in his eyes.

"I thought I would rather tell you myself than write it that I am absolutely ruined, and have taken these lodgings for a few weeks, whilst I look out for a governess's situation."

"What do you mean?" he asked, catching her hand, and holding it fast. "How could you take a situation for a fortnight, and our wedding-day is on Saturday week?"

"I can't marry you now, Lord Ramsden; and I am sure you can't wish it now."

"On the contrary, Adelaide, I wish it more than ever."

"But I am not only ruined, Lord Ramsden—I must tell you now, for it is sure to be found out—that I am not a lady by birth, and only got up in the world when I had all that money left me. It didn't matter how I was born all the while I was so rich; but it matters now, of course, and so I release you from your engagement, and hope you will be happy with somebody else."

"I am so sure of being happy with you I don't care to try doubtful experiments, thank you."

"But, Lord Ramsden, the whole world will blame you."

"What do I owe to the world that I should sacrifice my domestic happiness on its shrine? I love you, as I never dreamt I could love. I want you for my wife; and as you have promised yourself to me you can't draw back now."

She argued the matter for several minutes, but as she made no impression she concluded at last with,—

"I think you are very foolish. Your friends will all be very angry with you."

"I have no friends."

"Not the Honourable Percy Lascelles?"

"Well, yes; I like him better than anyone else. But I know what he will say about the matter. He wishes he were in my place."

Miss St. Maur blushed divinely, and declared him to be incorrigible, but she said no more. And it was finally settled that their marriage should take place from the house of a married cousin of his, whom Miss St. Maur knew and liked.

Meanwhile Lord Ramsden insisted that she should stay with Mrs. Venables, and not in her mean little lodgings, although she declared she had not been accustomed to anything grander in her youth, and could do quite well.

"Anyhow, I am sure you were accustomed to cleanliness, and this is not clean; besides, that dreadful maid—"

"Poor child! You don't understand what it is to be poor!"

"Indeed, I do; but poverty and dirt are not a necessary combination; and I don't believe that you are the least comfortable here, Adelaide."

"I didn't say I was. But beggars can't be choosers, you must remember."

"I won't have you speak of yourself in that way, darling. You are rich in love if not in money."

"I am afraid love doesn't count for much in this mercenary world."

"It counts for everything with me."

"Isn't this something new?"

"Since I knew you, and learnt what love was. There comes a time with all men—when they can only feel—and have ceased to reason."

"Have you ceased to reason, then?"

"You would tell me so, I suppose."

"Perhaps I should, for you are doing a very foolish thing."

"As we are not likely to agree upon this subject it would be better not to discuss it," he answered, stooping to kiss her, "I am perfectly satisfied—and that is enough."

The next day Miss St. Maur left her humble lodgings in Lavender-terrace—paying for the month just the same, and giving presents besides to the slovenly maid, and the dirty little children. The landlady expressed herself extremely sorry to part with her, as she was just the sort of lodger to give style to the house, she said, but, of course, it was natural she should prefer visiting, and so it was no use grumbling.

"Now I am happy again," Lord Ramsden said as he saw her installed in his cousin's drawing-room. "You look in your proper place."

"That shows how deceitful appearances can be—for I am not."

"Hush!" he said, "you forget that I don't believe a word you say!"

The next few days Adelaide was so sweet and gracious to her lover; she riveted his chains closer and closer, making himself feel as if all his happiness were bound up in her, and he could not live without her. Mrs. Venables laughed at him unreservedly, and declared she had never expected to see him come to this; but he was too much in earnest to mind her bantering, and did not even take the trouble to retort.

On the eve of the wedding-day she was considerate enough to go out and leave them alone, and as Lord Ramsden took Adelaide into his arms, he said passionately,—

"Oh! darling, I begin to be so glad you are not rich!"

"Why?" she said, smiling up at him tenderly.

"Because I shall like to give you everything."

A strange, stern look replaced the smile on her red lips.

"Perhaps I may not quite care for the burden of such an obligation."

"My dear Adelaide, could there be any question of obligation between husband and wife? All that I have belongs to you, and surely I am more than repaid by the gift of your sweet self."

The smile was all gone now, and her eyes were as dark as midnight, and seemed to chill her lover through and through.

"It is not for me to depreciate myself," she said, "or you will think I am fishing for compliments; but perhaps you will repent your bargain later."

"Adelaide, if you talk in that way I shall do something desperate," he cried, in a hurt tone. "You are always trying to frighten me out of my happiness."

"Because I warn you of certain possibilities."

"Which are no possibilities at all. Come, I won't allow you to depress me to-night of all nights, when I feel, and know myself to be the most fortunate man under the stars."

She looked up at him again with that odd expression of mingled triumph and pity, but before she could prophecy any more evil her lips were sealed by his, and she was held so fast and hard she had to call out for mercy.

Adelaide looked very lovely in her bridal dress, and Lord Ramsden felt almost mad with joy and passion as she stood downcast and trembling by his side at the altar. Her only bridesmaids were Mrs. Venables' little girls—two tiny fairies of seven and eight, in blue satin and lace—with pink-eyed daisies in their hats, and beautiful necklaces of the bridegroom's gifts. But charming as they were, who could look at them when the bride stood there "in gloss of satin and glimmer of pearl," with the rich flush on her face, forming an exquisite contrast to her snowy garments?

The words were spoken in all solemnity that made them man and wife, and then they returned to Mr. Venables' house, where a quiet little breakfast was prepared. The Honourable Percy, who was best man, came out very strong when he proposed the bride's health, and said he had such a high opinion of Lady Ramsden he should have liked to marry her himself, but should have to remain a bachelor now, he supposed, until Adela Venables had grown up, when she had faithfully promised to marry him.

The bride and bridegroom departed at about five for Dover, en route for Paris, Lady Ramsden taking with her as maid a middle-aged quiet-looking person, who seemed, her husband thought, extremely shy; for she wore a thick veil over her face, and was in evident trepidation whenever he approached her.

However, he soon forgot all about her in the happiness of being alone with his wife, and the journey seemed so short he could hardly believe it when the train whistled its way into Dover Station and a porter came to the door.

At Lady Ramsden's wish they were not to cross that night, and Lord Ramsden had telegraphed the day before to secure rooms at the Lord Warden.

Thither, therefore, they at once repaired, and as it wanted nearly two hours before dinner-time they strolled to the end of the pier, and sat down to watch the sea and the passing boats.

Adelaide was silent, even and sad; but he was too happy to find any fault with her, and perhaps admired her sensitiveness on the whole.

When they re-entered the hotel Lady Ramsden went straight to her room to dress for dinner, and he smoked a quiet cigar, thinking of her all the while, and longing, lover-like, to hear the silken rustle of her dress along the floor.

He had begged her not to make much toilette, and she had promised with one of her oddest smiles.

But when three-quarters of an hour had passed and she did not come Lord Ramsden began to think she had not been able to resist the temptation of surprising him by one of Worth's masterpieces, and though he was flattered, he felt inclined to chide her too.

When another ten minutes passed bringing no sign of her he felt almost annoyed, and going to her room knocked at the door. No answer was returned, and he entered without further ceremony to find the room empty.

Her ladyship's boxes were still unpacked, her dressing-case stood on the table; the only thing he missed was a small travelling bag which he had heard her tell one of the waiters to carry straight to her room when they first arrived.

He glanced into the dressing-room, that also was empty; and then he went back to the sitting-



room, and ringing the bell, said with the most natural air he could assume, as the waiter appeared,—

"Will you send her ladyship's maid to me?" "She is not in the hotel, my lord," answered the man, respectfully. "I saw her go out with her ladyship about half-an-hour ago."

Lord Ramsden could just command his voice sufficiently to say,—

"Oh! thank you, it's all right," but as soon as the sound of the other's footsteps had died away, he searched the bedroom thoroughly for a letter which should explain this strange proceeding.

He found nothing there, but in the dressing-room there was a note pinned on the pincushion, which he seized hold of eagerly, although his hand trembled so violently he could scarcely keep it steady enough to be able to decipher the lines. It ran thus,—

"When I tell you that I am Marah Ambrose, the sister of the unfortunate child whom you so cruelly deceived, and who died through you, you will understand why I married you, and why I leave you."

"Delia loved you, and you would not have her; you love me, and I will not have you. Is it not quite fair? People must reap as they have sown. When I saw my darling lying dead at the old house, and knew that she had perished because you had not come to redeem your promise, I swore a great oath to avenge her if it was ever in my power."

"And fortune favoured me wonderfully. My godmother, Mrs. Lane, came unexpectedly into a large estate in Leamshire by the sudden death of her only brother. She was in very delicate health at the time, and the shock weakened her so much that she gradually sank, and in rather less than a month was lying by his side."

"She had no near relations, and left me all her wealth, amounting to over £12,000 a year. 'Now,' I said to myself, 'I will have my revenge! I will make him love me, and when he most hopes for happiness I will treat him as he treated Delia—forsake him, but with *adieu*, in the face of the world, whose scorn and derision he will become.'

"My mother, who pretended to be my maid, was with me all along, and has helped me to my vengeance, and flies with me to day. You need have no fear that I shall drag your honour through the dust. I am far too proud to be a coquette, and moreover, I cast off your name when I cast you off, and hope never to hear it again."

"I have not lost my money. I simply sold the estate because I did not intend to go there again; but I put you to this test, wishing to see if you would forsake me as you had forsaken Delia. So there is no need to be anxious about me."

"My mother and I will seek a home together in a distant land, comforted by this thought—that we avenged poor Delia, and pierced your heart with the same arrow that killed our gentle, innocent darling. You will find every jewel you gave me, and every letter you wrote me, in the dressing-case at the hotel. *Adieu*."

"MARAH ADELAIDE AMBROSE."

This looked very cruel to Lord Ramsden as he read it, and he stood for a moment absolutely stunned.

A cold perspiration broke out on his white face, and he staggered so weakly he was obliged to sit down for a few minutes to recover himself.

Then seeing that the table was set in the next room he got in there somehow, opened the bottle of champagne that stood ready on the sideboard, and poured himself out a whole tumblerful.

Gradually the colour came back to his white face, and the light to his eyes.

"I will have her back this very night, so help me Heaven!" he said, and set his teeth like one who means to have his way, "or die in the attempt."

#### CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER tumblerful of the champagne, and the blood came tingling back to his very finger ends, and he felt suddenly strong again.

Seizing his hat he hurried from the hotel, telling the waiter, whom he met on the stairs, to throw away the dinner, and put supper on the table in two hours.

He went to the station close by first of all; but he did not expect to find Marah there, and therefore was not disappointed, as he strode off to the other, helped by the champagne, which gave lightness to his feet without over-weighting his head.

Here there was no second platform, so that his search was less complicated, but he soon saw that his wife and her mother were not there. But it was not likely, under the circumstances, they would show themselves until the last moment, and therefore he went to the waiting-room.

They were not in the one for first-class passengers, but when he looked into the other he caught sight of two dark figures, wearing plain ulsters and thick veils, sitting close together in the darkest corner, talking in a low, anxious tone; and walking up to them before they perceived his presence he laid his hand on the shrieking shoulder of the younger woman, and said, gravely,—

"What you planned was cruel and unwomanly, and contrary, I know, to your real feelings. But I forgive this—even as I ask you to pardon the wrong I unwittingly did your sister—and I bid you come back and perform the vows you took upon yourself solemnly in the sight of Heaven this morning."

There was a silence, broken presently by a dry sob, and Marah threw back the veil from her white face, saying, brokenly,—

"I cannot live with Delia's murderer. You must know there could be no happiness for us together, Lord Ramsden."

"That I absolutely deny. But you must see we cannot discuss the question here, Adelaide"—for a party of young labourers and their sweethearts had just come in, and were looking curiously at them—"come back to the hotel, and if later you desire to leave me, I swear to you, on my honour, you shall go. But Heaven forgive us all such terrible sins—and surely we ought to be merciful to each other."

She dropped her veil again to hide her tears, but when he offered her his arm she took it submissively, and allowed him to lead her out.

Was it possible that Marah's woman's heart pleaded for him—had pleaded all along, and that her revenge was costing her very dear?

Mrs. Ambrose would have walked behind them, but Lord Ramsden turned to her, and said, almost sternly,—

"Nay, it is time this farce should end, Mrs. Ambrose. You are my wife's mother, and I cannot suffer you to efface yourself in this way."

Marah put a trembling hand in her mother's, and drew her to her side, and in this way they walked back to the Lord Warden, and up to their own rooms.

Entering the drawing-room, Lord Ramsden bolted the door behind them, and placing Marah, who was shaking from head to foot, on a couch, fetched her a glass of wine from the adjoining apartment, and then, when a little gleam of colour had returned to her face, he stood in front of her, and said,—

"Now, Adelaide, of what am I accused?"

"You killed Delia," she said, trying to speak sternly, although there was a new softness in her eyes which looked almost as if she desired to be proved in the wrong.

"I flirted with her as I had flirted with dozens of others, never having known what it was to be seriously attached to any woman until I knew you. I was wrong, no doubt, but I swear to you I never once guessed that Delia cared for me really, and fancied when I left her that day she would have forgotten all about me before a month had gone by. I liked her as we like a pretty child; and her innocence and sweetness, her kind sympathy, made her very attractive to a man who was suffering from fortune's disfavour and wanted a comforter. If I had supposed that Delia would become attached to me I should have left Dithorpe, but it never once occurred to me, as I said just now."

"Then how came you to promise Delia you would return?"

"I suppose I was little touched at parting, and liked to persuade myself I should be coming back to her soon. For I found when the moment of parting came that I liked her more than I knew; and I must tell you, Adelaide, that your chief charm for me when I first saw you was that now and then there was an expression in your face that reminded me of Delia. I could not understand it then, but I never saw or spoke to you that I did not remember her."

"And yet I am not like Delia," and Marah spoke quite gently now.

"Not in feature or colouring, certainly, but often in expression. You glance up inquiringly under your eyelashes sometimes just as she did, and your smile is her smile, when it is a natural one."

"I don't wonder that you say a natural one. I have not smiled once from my heart since I saw my darling lie dead."

He had stood all this while, but he sat down beside her now, touched by her sad tone, and said tenderly,—

"If you could feel for her so much, Adelaide, you could also feel for me. She is dead in her innocent faith, and among the angels in Heaven, therefore a hundred times happier than she could ever have been on earth. I have probably a long life before me—and you would condemn me for years and years of misery and hopelessness for her sake, who was far too good and gentle to be pleased by such cruelty."

Marah knew that, for Delia had pleaded forgiveness with her last breath, and had again and again urged that she might have attached more importance to Lord Ramsden's words than they had deserved. But how could she bear to feel that the girl was unavenged when this had been the one great purpose of her life for months, when for this she had accepted her husband's name and love, that she might turn, serpent-like, and sting the bosom in which she lay? It was impossible. Delia's memory was more to her than this man. It ought to be, it must be. She was growing weak because—because—

Here she broke off with a sort of shame. She was going to add,—

"Because I love him."

Mrs. Ambrose had been perfectly silent all this while, leaving the husband and wife to settle the matter between themselves, but when Marah did not answer she put in quietly,—

"If Delia were here I know what she would say, Marah!"

"What?" eagerly.

"The same as she said in dying, 'You must forgive him, dear. I am sure he didn't understand.'"

Marah hid her face in her hands, and wept convulsively. She seemed to hear Delia's faint broken voice and see the dim pleading eyes.

"Yes, I know she would," said Lord Ramsden, following up the advantage, "she was so kind."

"The more shame to you, then, for killing her!" exclaimed Marah, flashing scorn at him through her tears.

"I did not kill her, Adelaide."

"You did not stab or shoot her certainly; but she died through you."

"Suppose you had unconsciously gained the affections of some man (it may have happened more than once even), and not being naturally strong, this trouble ruined his health, and he had died; would you have considered it fair if his relations had condemned you as his murderer?"

"Yes, if I had tried to attract him."

"With the object of gratifying your own vanity, you mean; but I had no such thought, Heaven knows! Indeed I never thought at all."

"But you ought to have thought!" passionately.

"Are any of us perfect, Adelaide?"

"I know I am not—nor you neither, Marah, if you are nourishing such bitter thoughts," put in Mrs. Ambrose decidedly.

She had been quite ready to aid and abet her daughter in the first days when she believed Lord Ramsden to be a monster of cruelty, and

Delia's destroyer; but since she had known him better, and saw how disinterested his attachment to Marah was, and how kind and courteous he was to everyone about him, her feelings altered, and she would fain have had Marah forgive him and accept the happiness within her reach.

Marah looked up at her reproachfully, and yet it almost pleased her, too, that her mother should go over to the enemy for whom her heart was pleading in every aching chord.

"Yes, that's the truth, child!" pursued Mrs. Ambrose. "I was as bitter as you are once upon a time, for I believed that Lord Ramsden forsook Delia because she was poor and of humble birth; but since he was ready to marry you when you appeared to be no better off, it shows we misjudged him, and ought to have been a little more merciful in our judgment, as he says. I am sure now he would have married our poor Delia if he had loved her enough—as he loves you—and as there's no calling her back to life we must try to be happy without her. You have married Lord Ramsden, and ought to do your duty to him."

"I married him on purpose to punish him, mother. You know that quite well."

"Yes, and did the very thing you accused him of doing, just to show him how wicked he had been," returned Mrs. Ambrose in her shrewd practical way. "Come, Marah—I am going away presently—let me feel that I am leaving you happy in the right way."

She took Marah's hand and placed it in her husband's; but although Lord Ramsden's strong fingers quivered with eagerness they did not close over their tremulous little captive. He would have nothing that she did not give him voluntarily after all that had passed, and she sat like a stone, with a cold look in her beautiful eyes, and her lips drawn into a close crimson thread.

After having pursued this man so relentlessly should she suddenly give in like a weak fool?

Her heart said "Yes," the spirit of revenge said "No."

And perhaps Marah would have listened to the latter, and wrecked all the happiness of her future life, only that Mrs. Ambrose, who had seen Marah kissing something of Lord Ramsden's a little while before, and knew by this that she loved him, knelt down beside her, and said, imploringly—

"Marah, I beseech you to listen to your better feelings, and to poor Delia's last request, for my sake as well as your own. I have lost one daughter by death. Let me feel, at any rate, that the other is happy in a good man's keeping. And you may say what you like, Lord Ramsden is a good man, and he ought not to be punished so severely for one fault. If I say this it must be true, for I loved Delia even better than you did, and would help you to punish anyone who had done her real wrong."

Marah's beautiful head drooped, and the tears came again; but her attitude was less discouraging, for Lord Ramsden ventured to press the hand he held, whilst he bent forward to murmur in her ear,—

"Punish me if you like, but stay with me, too, for I cannot live without you, dear."

Marah tried to straighten herself, but somehow she lost her balance and fell prone into his arms; and then Mrs. Ambrose quickly departed and left them alone together.

Marah's vengeance ended as many a woman's vengeance has ended before; and there is no doubt that she congratulated herself often in the years to come that she had listened to mercy; but when Lord Ramsden, who is sure enough of her to be able to joke even about such a time, will say, laughingly, "Ah! my love, if you had gone away that night you would soon have come back again," Marah shakes her head with great decision.

"Indeed you are quite wrong," she says. "Your finding us as you did was quite an accident, for mother had looked out the train without her spectacles, and made a mistake in the time; so that instead of getting off at once, as we had hoped—"

"Hoped, Adelaide!" reproachfully.

"I mean expected. We had to wait just an hour. We went into the third-class waiting room, thinking you would never look for us there; and indeed I didn't fancy you would look for us at all, after you read my letter."

"I would have died rather than acquiesce in the miserable fate you had prepared for me. Besides, I loved you, darling."

"Why do you put all your love into the past tense?" she said, smiling.

"Because there is no need to speak of the present, for I am sure you know—"

"That what at first was passion's voice Has since been turned to reason's vow."

Marah finished the quotation,—

"And though I then might love the more, Trust me I love the better now."

"That's Moore, not me," said Lord Ramsden, kissing her. "I love you more and better, too, since the day you showed yourself such a true woman, and gave up revenge for love."

[THE END.]

## FACETIE.

SAID the lecturer: "The roads up these mountains are too steep and rocky for even a donkey to climb, therefore I did not attempt the ascent."

MIKE: "Why do thim false eyes be made of glass, now?" Pat: "Shure, an' how else could they say throo 'em, ye thickhead."

HE: "I've inherited a fortuna. Aren't you glad to hear it?" SHE: "Yes; I'm engaged to a fellow I don't like."

HE: "You are the only girl I ever loved—" SHE: "Oh, never mind that. The main question is, am I the only girl you ever will love?"

MISS DIXIE: "Do you draw everything larger than it really ought to be?" ARTIST: "Everything but my salary."

BAGWIG: "What was the greatest trial you ever presided over, my lord?" His Lordship: "Bringing up ten daughters, sir."

HOUSEKEEPER: "Your milk is as thin as water to-day." MILKMAN: "Wall, mum, it was very foggy this morning when we milked."

BILLOWS: "Now, if you were in my shoes what do you think you would do?" BREESE (examining them): "Well, I certainly think I should get another pair."

"WHERE did you get the design for your servant's livery, Miss Parvrenu?" "Oh, my ancestors used it, Miss Prim." "Indeed! By whom were they employed?"

THE MISTRESS: "What's the matter with Master Willie? Is he filled with remorse?" SARAH JANE: "No, ma'am; he got into the larder when I was out, and he's filled with jam."

Mrs. B.: "Have you any near relatives, Norah?" Norah: "Only an aunt, mum; an' she isn't what you might call near, for it's in the North of Ireland she lives, mum."

"That fellow has more lives than a cat," exclaimed May. "Is that so?" said Carrie. "Yes. I have cut him dead a dozen times, but he still lives."

"PLEASE Uncle Arthur," said Effie, "do come and play chess with me." "Oh, Effie! Don't you remember! It's Sunday!" "Well, we can let the bishop win."

YOUNG MASHAM (leaving cards): "Is anyone ill here now?" FOOTMAN (fresh from the country): "I'm doing pretty well at present, thank you, sir; but her ladyship hasn't yet shook off her cold."

JABOB: "How did you make your fortune?" ISAAC: "On horse-racing." "What! I never knew you bettered." "I didn't. I started a pawnshop just opposite the entrance to the racecourse for the accommodation of people who wanted to get home when the races were over."

LITTLE ETHEL: "Mamma, what does it rain for?" Mrs. de Homely: "To make the trees and grass and everything grow pretty." Little Ethel: "Then why doesn't it rain on papa?"

"Mr number is six," she said to the young man at the counter, "but my hand will bear squeezing, won't it, Edwin!" turning to her lover who was with her; and they both blushed.

"HUMBLE as I am," said a loud-voiced spouter at a meeting, "I still remember that I'm a fraction of this magnificent Empire." "You are indeed," said a bystander, "and a vulgar one at that."

"It must be strange for the Spaniards to feel that they are ruled by that boy king of theirs—a mere infant." "Why?" "It is so uncommon." "Humph! It's plain you never had an infant."

A POOR actor with a book under his arm, was entering a pawnbroker's shop, when he encountered a friend who inquired what he was going to do. "Only to spout Shakespeare," was the reply.

"THAT's a handsome pair of slippers you're wearing, Harry." "They ought to be; I'm sure they cost enough. My wife made them, and then coaxed me out of the price of a sealskin jacket."

CUSTOMER: "You have a sign in your window—'A suit of clothes made while you wait.' Do you really do that?" Tailor: "Yes, sir. You leave your order with a deposit, and then wait till the garments are finished."

CLARA: "I met Mr. Tutter on the train the other day, just before we got to a long tunnel." MAUDE: "Yes, so he told me." CLARA: "Oh, did he? What did the dear boy say about it?" MAUDE: "He said he would rather kiss you in a tunnel than anywhere else."

CURIOUS: "Hello! Bliss, what makes you look so happy?" BLISS: "Letter from my girl." "What does she say?" "Don't know; can't read her writing. But it begins with 'My darling Fred' and ends with 'yours lovingly as ever,' so I know it's all right."

"Isn't it a pity that all the good-looking people can't be bright, and all the bright people good-looking?" said Miss Pinkerly. "Yes, indeed, it is, Miss Pinkerly. But tell me, if you had your choice, which would you be?" replied young Tutter.

"PAPA"—she knelt beside the dejected figure and fondly kissed the drooping head—"Papa, can I not keep the wolf from the door with my singing?" He was without hope, although he smiled. "My child," he sighed, "your singing would keep almost anything else from the door, but the wolf is pretty nerry, you know."

Mrs. BELGRAVIA: "Allow me to congratulate you on your marriage. Your wife is certainly a most charming lady." Mr. Uglymug: "Yes, and she is as amiable as she is lovely. And she is so considerate. She's willing to put up with almost anything." Mr. Belgravia: "Yes, I knew that when I heard that she had married you."

A GENTLEMAN once asked a little girl, an only child, how many sisters she had, and was told "three or four." Her mother asked Mary, when they were alone, what induced her to tell such an untruth. "Why, mamma," cried Mary, "I didn't want him to think you were so poor that you hadn't but one child. Wouldn't he have thought us very drefull poor?"

"BOBBY is attending to his pianoforte lessons very faithfully of late," said the youth's uncle. "Yes," replied his mother. "I don't have any trouble with him about that now." "How did you manage it?" "Some of the neighbours complained of the noise his exercises made, and I told him about it. Now he thinks it's fun to practise."

CUSTOMER (returning): "Didn't I give you a sovereign just now in mistake for a shilling?" Shopkeeper (positively): "No, sir." Customer (turning to go): "It isn't of any particular consequence. I had a counterfeit sovereign that I carried simply as a curiosity. I must have lost it some—." Shopkeeper (hastily): "Wait a moment; I'll look again."



## SOCIETY.

NOT since the ever memorable year of Jubilee has London been so rich in royalties as it has this season.

THE Duke of Connaught will go to the New Forest for the Manœuvres, while the Duchess is going abroad for a month, and about the middle of September they will join the Queen at Balmoral.

THE Duke of Coburg will again be in England at the end of November for two or three weeks. The Duchess and her daughters are now staying at the Château de Rosenau, near Coburg.

THE Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse have taken up their residence for the summer at the Château of Kranichstein, a pretty place among the beech and oak forests which lie behind Darmstadt.

THE Comtesse de Paris has left Stowe, and is settled for the summer, with the younger members of her family, at the Château de Randan, in Auvergne. Randan lies among mountains and forests, and there is one of the finest views in France from the terrace of the Château.

THE Duchess of Albany and her children leave Claremont for Holland, and they will be the guests of the Queen Regent of the Netherlands at the Château of Soestdyk, which is famous for its fine gardens and its large beech forests.

THE Hereditary Princess of Saxo-Meiningen and Princess Feodora will probably come to England next month on a short visit to the Queen at Osborne. Altenstein is a large house built on a rocky height, with charming grounds and a beautiful park, and it is surrounded by forests which are full of game.

PRINCE EDWARD OF YORK is a fine and beautiful boy, which opinion is held especially by his grandmother, the Princess of Wales, who is devotedly attached to the wee man, and most patiently acts as nurse whenever he is within her reach.

QUEEN ELIZABETH of Roumania purposes going shortly to Russia to make a "cure" of Koumiss (sterilized mare's milk) in the Calmuck Steppes. It is not the first time Carmen Sylva has followed this treatment, having tried it with the greatest success in 1880, when she became quite strong and well after drinking several gallons of this nourishing beverage.

THE Duke of York is to be shortly asked officially to accept the title of Prince of Ireland. Should His Royal Highness do so, the Irish Viceroyal Court will be abolished, and the Viceroyal Lodge in the Phoenix Park will become one of the Royal residences, where George, Prince of Ireland, will chiefly reside. This is as it should be.

GOLDEN chains ornamented with pearls are out of fashion; they have been too easily copied in material of the cheapest description, and a new ornament has appeared, which is a marvel of richness and grace; it is an uninterrupted succession of flat, tiny brilliants, finely mounted in open silver work. It forms a magic and sparkling thread, meandering and quivering all the time among the ruffles, the lace, and the pompons, and it is charming. Though, with the exception of the big solitaires screwed on the ear, no diamonds are allowed by daylight in a Parisian toilet, the diamond serpentes are worn in the morning, but they are often arranged on a velvet bodice for the opera or a dinner party.

THE Princess of Wales has lately had some pretty dresses made in Paris. A pearl white satin is veiled in tulle with silver arabesques on it, and applique silver embroideries forming a border at the edge of the skirt. The low bodice is pointed, and has frilled tulle on the front, with three sprays of embroidery rising from the waist on to the tulle; the sleeves are short, and not particularly full. A white brocade has a pattern of Guellder roses; the skirt is plain, not very long, but having godets. There are two bodices, one of the same material as the dress, and low necked, with a trimming of black roses with yellow centres; the other high, of white silk veiled in silver spangled gauze, and made rather full.

## STATISTICS.

THE death-rate in our prisons is 8 per 1,000.

NO fewer than 625,538 persons visited the London Zoo last year.

THE highest temperature recorded is 124 degrees and a fraction, taken in Algeria, July 14, 1879.

IT is estimated that the thinnest part of a soap-bubble is only 1-156000th of an inch in thickness.

FULLY 28,000 persons annually visit the birth-place of Shakespeare. About one-fourth of them are Americans.

THE largest telegraph office in the world is in the General Post Office building, London. There are over 3,000 operators, 1,000 of whom are women. The batteries are supplied by 80,000 cells.

## GEMS.

EXCELLENCE is never granted to man but as the reward of labour.

HE is a fool who cannot be angry; but he is a wise man who will not.

PROSPERITY is no just scale. Adversity is the only true balance to weigh friends.

SOME temptations come to the industrious, but all temptations attack the idle.

EDUCATION and instruction are the means, the one by use, the other by precept, to make our natural faculty of reason both the better and the sooner to judge rightly between truth and error, good and evil.

ALL moral excellence thrives in an atmosphere of appreciation. Many a man has won a victory over fierce temptation simply by the consciousness that some one has faith in him and believes that he will conquer. Many a one also has been driven into desperate iniquity by the thought that there is not one left who cherishes any hope for his future.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**SUGAR COOKIES.**—A cup and a half of sugar, two eggs, one-half a cup of shortening, one-half cup of milk, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, half a teaspoonful of soda, and flour enough to mould. Flavour to the taste.

**LEMON PRESERVE.**—Half pound sugar, two ounces butter, three eggs, rind and juice of a large lemon; grate the rind and squeeze the juice among all the other things—eggs, butter, sugar—put it in an enamelled pan and stir it till it just boils, then pour it into a jar and it will keep quite easily; use it on cooked pastry or tartlets.

**STUFFED CUCUMBERS.**—Select good-sized, fresh cucumbers, pare them and cut them into halves. With a spoon scoop out the centre or seed part, put one cupful of fine breadcrumbs into a bowl, add one tablespoonful of melted butter, a tablespoonful of grated onion, a teaspoonful of salt, and, if it can be had, a green pepper chopped fine. Put this mixture into the cucumber, stand in a baking-pan. Put into the bottom of the baking-pan a tablespoonful of butter and half a cupful of water. Cook in a quick oven thirty minutes, basting several times. Serve very hot.

**SCRAMBLING EGGS.**—Break half a dozen fresh eggs into a bowl, and beat to a cream with a Dover egg-beater, adding a teaspoonful of milk for each egg and a half teaspoonful of salt and a saltspoonful of pepper. Beat for a moment. Do not begin to cook them until all are seated at table. Melt a spoonful of butter in a frying-pan, and when it is hot pour in the egg and stir constantly to prevent scorching. About five minutes will make them a creamy mass; to be served on slices of buttered toast, or simply in a deep covered dish. The plates and dish must be hot.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

IN the Persian Gulf there are springs of fresh water that furnish supplies to passing vessels.

IN Hamburg the authorities tax a dog according to its size.

ALL ancient music was in the minor key, without harmony or counterpoint, and entirely vocal and rythmical, like our recitative.

THE Sahara is crossed by mountains sufficiently high to be at times snow-covered, while in other parts it is much below the sea-level.

IT is a strange fact that the right hand, which is more sensible to the touch than the left, is less sensible than the latter to the effect of heat or cold.

CATS and several other animals have a false eyelid, which can be drawn over the eyeball either to cleanse it or to protect it from too strong a light.

A NOVEL sort of window-glass has been invented in Berlin. Persons on the inside of the house can see through it, but it is opaque to those on the outside.

ONE peculiarity of pearls is that, unlike other precious gems, they are liable to decay. Occasionally a valuable pearl changes colour, seems to be attacked with a deadly disease, and crumbles into dust.

A PHAETON, driven by electricity, with a seat for two passengers, is now to be seen in the streets of Paris. The steering axle is in front, and beneath the driver's foot is a pedal that controls a "circuit-breaker" and a brake.

NO one can tell where the diamond goes to in combustion. Burn it, and it leaves no ash, the flame is exterior like that of a cork, and when it has blazed itself out, there remains not even so much as would dust the antennae of a butterfly.

THE widest canal in the world is said to be the Chenab Irrigation Canal in the north-west provinces of India. It is one hundred and ten feet broad, and will be two hundred feet when finished. The main canal will be four hundred and fifty miles long.

THE cavalry of the future will be lancers. The old objection that the lance, by its bright point, revealed the whereabouts of the cavalryman to the enemy, will be removed by the invention of a jointed lance which doubles up and is carried in a socket on the stirrup like the carbine.

VITRINE, a new composition, is an artificial stone having a firmly adhering, tough, glossy surface. The substance is semi-opaque and lends itself to more elaborate decorative purposes than any other now in use. It can be used as a glazing on brick walls in breweries, dairies, chemical laboratories, and so on, as well as for plain or decorated counters, mantelpieces and other purposes.

ONE of the finest collections of Crown jewels in the world is possessed by the most helplessly broken-down potentate, the Sultan of Turkey. Every Sultan from the earliest times has made a point of collecting jewels and selling none, and thus, through the course of ages, the collection has become enormous. The jewel-rooms of the Turkish Sultan resemble nothing so much as the description of Aladdin's cave in the *Arabian Nights*.

UNDERWEAR is now made in Paris of peat. It has been known for some time that peat has certain antiseptic qualities. A dead body which was buried in peat for over a century was found in a state of perfect preservation. Peat is used in the northern countries of Europe for surgical bandages, and the favourable results obtained by the Russian surgeons with peat bandages have induced the French army department to use it in the French hospitals. It has also been found that peat fibres in combination with other material possess wonderful absorbing properties. This has led to the use of peat fibres for the making of underwear in the place of flannel. The new material has proved very effective, absorbing perspiration and rapidly drying.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**EDA.**—It is most improper.

**M. H. G.**—See reply to "W. J."

**L. A.**—Inquire at the post office.

**ELLEN.**—There are several in that district.

**B. V.**—No such verdict has ever been returned.

**ARNOLD.**—You must exercise patience until the estate is wound up.

**CHRIS.**—Squeeze them out, one by one, and apply cold cream.

**SANDY.**—The Tay Bridge fell on Sunday, December 23rd, 1878.

**O. L.**—Tolls were abolished in Lanarkshire on May 21st, 1838.

**Mae.**—A few grains of borax put into milk will prevent it from becoming sour.

**DOUGFEL.**—We should certainly think advice given by a doctor is worth taking.

**UNSUCCESSFUL.**—We should advise you to make only half the quantity at a time.

**DUFFYANT.**—It has always been called "London Bridge," and never by any other name.

**MARIE.**—The only course is to turn the cloth; doubtful if colours would stand washing.

**K. G.**—We do not keep any record of the physical measurements of eminent people.

**BOB.**—Cane-hair brushes are of varying degrees of fineness; some are composed really of dog's hair.

**ISQUIRRE.**—Most places of the sort are not open on Sunday under any circumstances.

**BART.**—No recruits are asked for or taken from this country; any number is available in the colony itself.

**LEWIS.**—Guelph is the family name of Queen Victoria, and is pronounced as if spelled Gwelt.

**W. G.**—If without experience, consult someone who has a practical knowledge of seeds and seed-raising.

**OLD READER.**—We should recommend gentle bathing with borax and water, or carbonate of soda and water.

**FRANKED.**—A good sponging of buttermilk every night, and let it dry on the skin. Keep out of the sun.

**LEWAL.**—If any person of sound mind makes his will it will not be revoked or affected by his subsequent insanity.

**A. P.**—The instruction you ask for is quite beyond our province, and we should not advise you to attempt it.

**PARTMAN.**—Mice will take plenty of canaryseed; are especially fond of boiled rice, milk, boiled carrot, and green stuff.

**H. G.**—The estate of a person dying without next-of-kin, and not leaving a will, becomes the property of the Crown.

**ANOUS.**—There are no official colours; green is the colour adopted by the Irish people as typical of "the Emerald Isle."

**STANLEY.**—There is no way for amateurs except learning the trade personally, and supplying themselves with proper apparatus.

**FUSILED.**—It is applied, as a rule, to those who are extremely demonstrative in their attentions to each other.

**B. E.**—Shoes were blacked as early as the tenth century. The substance used seems to have been lampblack mixed with rancid oil.

**BEAN.**—A little grated nutmeg in peas, string beans or spinach improves their flavour, or rather, brings it out. Very little is needed.

**S. K.**—Some of the inland States, such as Colorado (Denver, capital), or even California inland (not on coast), would be most suitable.

**ANNA.**—It is said that moths will not attack green fabrics. Arsenic is used in dyeing green, and the moths are wise enough to shun that deadly drug.

**BRENDA.**—Books by themselves are very unsatisfactory teachers. Good singing comes to a great extent by imitating sounds, and these no book can give you.

**B. R.**—Fermentation goes on in bread as long as it is warm, and as this makes bread harder to digest it is thought best for persons with weak digestion not to eat it until it is cold.

**G. F.**—Red is the colour which can be distinguished at the greatest distance. The great facility with which red can be discerned is the cause of its general use as a railway signal.

**KITTY.**—By brushing shoes with a soft brush, rubbing a little glycerine well into the leather and polishing with a very clean, soft brush, no blacking will be required.

**INTERESTED.**—The prime of life in a man of regular habits and sound constitution is from thirty to fifty-five years of age; of a woman, from twenty-four to twenty-five to about forty years of age.

**JULIA.**—Requirements as to education vary. Nurses are paid different salaries, and each hospital has its own requirements. Of course nurses are allowed ample time for rest.

**MOLLY.**—On general principles a lady should pay her own fare, unless she is the guest of the gentleman, or unless he insists so emphatically as to call attention to the matter.

**MABEL.**—Blackheads frequently come from lack of thorough attention to bathing. Some persons are more susceptible to them than others, and should on that account be extra careful.

**HOUSEWIFE.**—One of the best cures is Keating's insect powder, which is fatal to the pests if dusted down into the crevices where they lurk, or along the floor at the spots which they frequent.

**EMMET.**—It is a common error to suppose that birds sleep with the head beneath the wing. No bird ever sleeps so; the head is turned round and laid upon the back, where it is often concealed by feathers.

**ELLALINE.**—Never write to a young man asking him to call after he has ceased coming of his own accord. He evidently has a reason, and it would be no credit to you to send him a letter.

**JASPER.**—We do not give medical advice, but should think the annoyance you refer to is due to some organic defect—something malformed in the throat or nose—and that probably even an operation would not cure it.

## SOMETHING GREAT.

THE trial was ended—the vigil past;  
All died in his arms was the knight at last,  
The goodliest knight in the whole wide land,  
With face that shone with a purpose grand.  
The king looked on him with gracious eyes,  
And said: "He is meed for some high prize;  
To himself he thought: 'I will conquer fate,  
I will surely die, or do something great.'"

So from the palace he rode away;  
There was trouble and need in town that day;  
A child had strayed from his mother's side  
Into the woodland dark and wide.  
"Help!" cried the mother, with sorrow wild,  
"Help me, sir knight, to seek my child!  
The hungry wolves in the forest roan,  
Help me to bring my lost one home!"

He shook her hand from his bridle rein,  
"Alas! poor mother, you ask in vain,  
Some meeker succour will do maybe,  
Some squire, or varlet of low degree.  
There are mighty wrongs in the world to right,  
I keep my sword for a noble fight.  
I am sad at heart for your baby's fate,  
But I ride in haste to do something great."

One wintry night, when the sun had set,  
A blind old man by the way he met;  
"Now, good sir knight, for our Lady's sake,  
On a sightless wanderer pity take!  
The winds blow cold, and the sun is down,  
Lead me, I pray, till I reach the town."  
"Nay," said the knight; "I cannot wait,  
I ride in haste to do something great."

So on he rode in his armour bright,  
His sword all keen for the longest for fight.  
"Laugh with us—laugh," cried the merry crowd,  
"Oh! weep!" wailed others with sorrow bowed.  
"Help us!" the weak and weary prayed,  
But for joy, nor grief, nor need he stayed,  
And the years rolled on, and his eyes grew dim,  
And he died—and none made mean for him.

He missed the good that he might have done;  
He missed the blessings he might have won;  
Seeking some glorious task to find,  
His eyes to all humbler work were blind.  
He that is faithful in that which is least  
Is bidden to sit at the heavenly feast.  
Yet men and women lament their fate,  
If they be not called to do something great. F. T.

**PHYLLIS.**—Food that has little odour itself and food that absorbs odours readily should be placed at the bottom of the refrigerator. All foods with a strong odour should be kept on the top shelves.

**B. M.**—Hard water is nothing more than water containing carbonate of lime in solution. When the water is free from lime it is then called soft water. Almost all spring water is hard. Rain water is soft.

**DUDLEY.**—Adventurers in art and literature in the great cities of Europe and America, and who lead an unsettled life, are called Bohemians. Bohemia, in Europe, was long thought to be the original home of the gipsies.

**DEPRAVED.**—You can assuredly recover payment by suing for the amount, but the cost of the action would exceed the sum to be recovered, and if there is no other way for it we think you had better be content to bear your loss.

**ALF.**—Portland prison is our largest prison. Nearly 2,000 convicts are located there, being employed chiefly in the "Crown quarries," from which something like 50,000 to 60,000 tons of Portland stone are annually exported.

**GRITA.**—You have no right to sacrifice your future prospects because he has simply shown for you a preference to other girls. Be decided, make him declare himself, or consider yourself free to form any eligible engagement which may offer.

**ALMA.**—Put the engraving on a board, cover stains thinly with fine common salt pounded, squeeze lemon juice on the salt to moisten most of it, tilt the board and wash off the salt with water from a boiling kettle; dry the engraving gradually upon the board, not before fire or in sun.

**MARION.**—Request him to return the letters you have written to him, and endeavour to banish him from your mind for all time. He has proved himself unworthy of a good woman's regard, and you should congratulate yourself upon escaping a life-long companionship with him. Hasty engagements lead to hasty marriages, and early repentance is generally the result.

**NEEL.**—There is probably no more efficacious "cure" of freckles than having the face with buttermilk at night before retiring, letting it dry on, and washing off in the morning; but if you like a more elegant recipe take this—one ounce (measured) fresh cream, eight ounces new milk, one ounce each juice of lemon, brandy, and eau de Cologne, one drachm sugar of lead; boil and skim.

**S. H.**—The Germania is a colossal statue, emblematic of the German name and nation. It stands on the banks of the Rhine, opposite Bingen. It was unveiled on September 26th, 1883. A long folding garment reaches to her feet, and the hair falls freely over the back. The hair is adorned with sprigs of oak. In the right hand, which is raised, she holds a crown and a wreath of oak, and in the left a sword.

**H. D.**—The custom of flying a flag at half-mast as a mark of mourning and respect arose out of the old naval and military practice of lowering the flag in time of war as a sign of submission. The vanquished always lowered his flag, while the victor flattered his own flag above it from the same staff. To lower a flag, therefore, is a token of respect to one's superior, and a signal of mourning and distress.

**HENRIET.**—White and red wines owe their difference to the fact that while the former is permitted to ferment without the grape skins, these are allowed to remain in the case of the latter. The colour of the grapes makes no difference whatever to the colour of the wine which they produce, for the juice of all grapes is as nearly as possible colourless. For instance, the grape which yields champagne is almost black in outward appearance.

**HARRIE.**—If you wish to transplant ferns from the woods, take a good-sized basket with you, and lift the plants—small ones being preferable—with as little disturbance of the roots as possible, and put them in your basket with some soil adhering. If you have some distance to go, cover the basket with a wet cloth, or peat moist moss about the plants. Give the plants a shady corner to grow in, and set them out in a soil as nearly like that in which they grew as possible.

**BLANCHET.**—You ought to know his capacity for business, and whether it is his own fault that he is so often without employment. You doubtless feel flattered by the attentions of your other two admirers, and as they both hold good positions it is but natural that you should institute comparisons between them and your fiancé. But as you state that you could not be happy with any one else, why make yourself discontented by thinking of the possibility of marrying some one you do not love?

**ALTHEA.**—Grate the rind of two lemons; put it to boil with two quarts of water, quarter ounce of ground ginger, one pound of sugar. Let it boil for twenty minutes or half an hour, then add, when a little cool, the juice of the lemons, and bottle for use. If wanted effervescent stir a little soda into the tumbler. Raspberry sherbet is made in the same way, with the juice of one pound of raspberries to this quantity, or at this season of the year, with raspberry essence and tartaric acid to give it the right degree of flavour.

**MILLCREW.**—Allow three-quarters of a pound of sugar to a pound of hulled fruit. Put in a preserving kettle and let stand at the back of the range till they are well covered with juice; then pull forward to boil up quickly. Stir with a wooden spoon just enough to keep them from burning. Ten minutes' rapid boiling is sufficient before the skimming and canning process may begin. Stand the jars in boiling water to prevent them from cracking them. Screw up the tops at once as tightly as you can, and stand them on the kitchen table till cold. Then screw up again a little tighter and leave them for an hour or two, tops down, to test their tightness. Then they may be put away in a cool, dry place.

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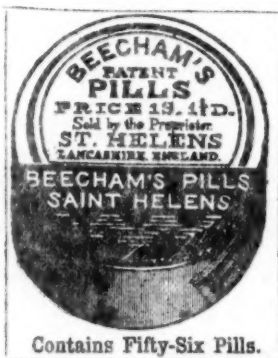
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